

THE
WORKS

OF

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THE
P I R A T E.

BY THE AUTHOR OF «WAVERLEY.»

*Nothing in him — — —
But doth suffer a sea-change.*

TEMPEST.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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ZWICKAU,

PRINTED FOR BROTHERS SCHUMANN.

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THE  
P I R A T E

BY THE AUTHOR OF "MYSTERY"

BIBLIOTHECA  
REGIA  
MONACENSIS.

IN FOUR VOLUMES

VOL III

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SWITZERLAND

PRINTED FOR BROTHERS DUNN

1844



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# THE PIRATE.

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## CHAPTER XXI.

*But lost to me, for ever lost those joys,  
Which reason scatters, and which time des-  
troys.*

*No more the midnight fairy train I view,  
All in the merry moonlight tippling dew.  
Even the last lingering fiction of the bram,  
The churchyard ghost, is now at rest again.*

*The Library.*

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THE moral bard, from whom we borrow the motto to this chapter, has touched a theme with which most readers have some feelings that vibrate unconsciously. Superstition, when not arrayed in her full horrors, but laying a gentle hand only on her suppliant's head, had charms



which we fail not to regret, even in those stages of society from which her influence is well nigh banished by the light of reason and general education. At least, in more ignorant periods, her system of ideal terrors had something in them interesting to minds which had few means of excitement. This is more especially true of those lighter modifications of superstitious feelings and practices which mingle in the amusements of the ruder ages, and are, like the auguries of Hallow-e'en in Scotland, considered partly as matter of merriment, partly as sad and prophetic earnest. And, with similar feelings, people even of tolerable education have, in our times, sought the cell of a fortune-teller, upon a frolic, as it is termed, and yet not always in a disposition absolutely sceptical towards the responses they receive.

When the sisters of Burgh - Westra arrived in the apartment destined for a breakfast, as ample as that which we have described on the preceding morning, and had undergone a jocular rebuke from the Udaller for their late attendance, they found the company, most of whom had already breakfasted, engaged in an ancient Norwegian custom, of the character which we have just described.

It seems to have been borrowed from those poems of the Scalds, in which champions and he-



roines are so often represented as seeking to know their destiny from some sorceress or prophetess, who, as in the legend called by Gray the Descent of Odin, awakens by the force of Runic rhyme the unwilling revealer of the doom of fate, and compels from her answers, often of dubious import, but which were then believed to express some shadow of the events of futurity.

An old sybil, Euphane Fea, the housekeeper we have already mentioned, was installed in the recess of a large window, studiously darkened by bear-skins and other miscellaneous drapery, so as to give it something the appearance of a Laplander's hut, and accommodated, like a confessional chair, with an aperture, which permitted the person within to hear with ease whatever questions should be put, though not to see the querist. Here seated, the voluspa, or sybil, was to listen to the Rhymical inquiries which should be made to her, and to return an extemporaneous answer. The drapery was supposed to prevent her from seeing by what individuals she was consulted, and the intended or accidental reference which the answer given under such circumstances bore to the situation of the person by whom the question was asked, often furnished food for laughter, and sometimes, as it happened, for more serious reflection. The sybil was usually chosen from her possessing the talent of im-



provisation in the Norse poetry; no unusual accomplishment, where the minds of many were stored with old verses, and where the rules of metrical composition are uncommonly simple. The questions were also put in verse; but as this power of extemporaneous composition, though common, could not be supposed universal, the medium of an interpreter might be used by any querist, which interpreter, holding the consulter of the oracle by the hand, and standing by the place from which the oracles were issued, had the task of rendering into verse the subject of inquiry.

On the present occasion, Claud Halcro was summoned, by the universal voice, to perform the part of interpreter; and, after shaking his head, and muttering some apology for decay of memory and poetical powers, contradicted at once by his own conscious smile of confidence and by the general shout of the company, the light-hearted old man came forward to play his part in the proposed entertainment.

But just as it was about to commence, the arrangement of parts was singularly altered. Norna of the Fitful-head, whom every one excepting the two sisters believed to be at the distance of many miles, suddenly, and without greeting, entered the apartment, walked majestically up to the bear-skin tabernacle, and signed to the female who was there seated to abdicate her sanctuary. The old



woman came forth, shaking her head, and looking like one overwhelmed with fear; nor, indeed, were there many in the company who saw with absolute composure the sudden appearance of a person, so well known and so generally feared as Norna.

She paused a moment at the entrance of the tent; and, as she raised the skin which formed the entrance, she looked up to the north, as if imploring from that quarter a strain of inspiration; then signing to the surprised guests that they might approach in succession the shrine in which she was about to install herself, she entered the tent, and was shrouded from their sight.

But this was a different sport from what the company had meditated, and to most of them seemed to present so much more of earnest than of game, that there was no alacrity shewn to consult the oracle. The character and pretensions of Norna seemed to almost all present too serious for the part which she had assumed; the men whispered to each other, and the women, according to Claud Halcro, realized the description of glorious John Dryden, —

“With horror shuddering, on a heap they ran.”

The pause was interrupted by the loud manly voice of the Udaller, “Why does the game stand



still, my masters? Are you afraid because my kinswoman is to play our Voluspa? it is kindly done in her, to do for us what none in the isles can do so well; and we will not baulk our sport for it, but rather go on the merrier."

There was still a pause in the company, and Magnus Troil added, "It shall never be said that my kinswoman sat in her bower unhalsed, as if she were some of the old mountain giantesses, and all from faint heart. I will speak first myself; but the rhyme comes worse from my tongue than when I was a score of years younger. Claud Halcro, you must stand by me."

Hand in hand they approached the shrine of the supposed sybil, and after a moment's consultation together, Halcro thus expressed the query of his friend and patron. Now, the Udaller, like many persons of consequence in Zetland, who, as Sir Robert Sibbald has testified for them, had begun thus early to apply both to commerce and navigation, was concerned to some extent in the whale-fishery of the season, and the bard had been directed to put into his halting verse an inquiry concerning its success.

CLAUD HALCRO.

"Mother darksome, Mother dread —  
Dweller on the Fitfulhead,



Thou canst see what deeds are done  
 Under the never-setting sun.  
 Look through sleet, and look through frost,  
 Look to Greenland's caves and coast, —  
 By the ice-berg is a sail  
 Chasing of the swarthy whale;  
 Mother doubtful, Mother dread,  
 Tell us, has the good ship sped?"

The jest seemed to turn to earnest, as all, bending their heads around, listened to the voice of Norna, who, without a moment's hesitation, answered from the recesses of the tent in which she was inclosed,

N O R N A.

"The thought of the aged is ever on gear, —  
 On his fishing, his furrow, his flock, and his  
 steer;  
 But thrive may his fishing, flock, furrow, and  
 herd,  
 While the aged for anguish shall tear his grey  
 beard.

There was a momentary pause, during which Triptolemus had time to whisper, "If ten witches and as many warlocks were to swear it, I will ne-



ver believe that a decent man will either fash his beard or himself about any thing, so long as stock and crop goes as it should do."

But the voice from within the tent resumed its low monotonous tone of recitation, and, interrupting farther commentary, proceeded as follows: —

#### N O R N A.

"The ship, well-laden as bark need be,  
Lies deep in the furrow of the Iceland sea; —  
The breeze for Zetland blows fair and soft,  
And gaily the garland\* is fluttering aloft:  
Seven good fishes have spouted their last,  
And their jaw-bones are hanging to yard and  
mast; \*\*

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\* The garland is an artificial coronet, composed of ribbands by those young women who take an interest in a whaling vessel or her crew: it is always displayed from the rigging, and preserved with great care during the voyage.

\*\* The best oil exudes from the jaw-bones of the whale, which, for the purpose of collecting it, are suspended to the masts of the vessel.



Two are for Lerwick, and two for Kirkwall, —  
Three for Burgh - Westra, the choicest of all."

"Now the powers above look down and protect us!" said Bryce Snaelsfoot; "for it is mair than woman's wit that has spaed out that ferly. I saw them at North Ronaldsha, that had seen the good bark, the Olave of Lerwick, that our worthy patron has such a great share in that she may be called his own in a manner, and they had broomed\* the bark, and, as sure as there are stars in heaven, she answered them for seven fish, exact as Norna has tell'd us in her rhyme."

"Umph — seven fish exactly? and you heard it at North Ronaldsha?" said Captain Cleveland, "and I suppose told it as a good piece of news when you came hither?"

"It never crossed my tongue, Captain," answered the pedlar; "I have kend mony chapmen, travelling merchants, and such like, neglect their goods to carry clashes and clavers up and

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\* There is established among whalers a sort of telegraphic signal, in which a certain number of motions, made with a broom, express to any other vessel the number of fish which they have caught.



down, from one country-side to another; but that is no traffic of mine. I dinna believe I have mentioned the Olave's having made up her cargo to three folks since I crossed to Dunrossness."

"But if one of those three had spoke the news over again, and it is two to one that such a thing happened, the old lady prophecies upon velvet."

Such was the speech of Cleveland, addressed to Magnus Troil, and heard without any applause. The Udaller's respect for his country extended to its superstitions, and so did the interest which he took in his unfortunate kinswoman. If he never rendered a precise assent to her high supernatural pretensions, he was not at least desirous of hearing them disputed by others.

"Norna," he said, "his cousin, (an emphasis on the word,) held no communication with Bryce Snaelsfoot, or his acquaintances. He did not pretend to explain how she came by her information; but he had always remarked that Scotsmen, and indeed strangers in general, when they came to Zetland, were ready to find reasons for things which remained sufficiently obscure to those whose ancestors had dwelt there for ages."

Captain Cleveland took the hint, and bowed, without attempting to defend his own scepticism.

"And now forward, my brave hearts," said the Udaller; "and may all have as good tidings



as I have; three whales cannot but yield — let me think how many hogsheads.”

There was an obvious reluctance on the part of the guests to be the next in consulting the oracle of the tent.

“Gude news are welcome to some folks, if they came frae the de’il himsell,” said Mistress Baby Yellowley, addressing the Lady Glowrowrum, for a similitude of disposition in some respects had made a sort of intimacy betwixt them; “but I think, my leddy, that this has ower mickle of rank witchcraft in it to have the countenance of douce Christian folks like you and me, my leddy.”

“There may be something in what you say, my dame,” replied the good Lady Glowrowrum; “but we Hialtlanders are no just like other folks; and this woman, if she be a witch, being the Fowde’s friend and near kinswoman, it will be ill ta’en if we haena our fortunes spaed like a’ the rest of them; and sae my nieces may e’en step forward in their turn, and nae harm dune. They will hae time to repent, ye ken, in the course of nature, if there be ony thing wrang in it, Mistress Yellowley.”

While others remained under similar uncertainty and apprehension, Halcro, who saw by the knitting of the old Udaller’s brows, and by a certain impatient shuffle of his right foot, like



the motion of a man who with difficulty refrains from stamping, that his patience began to wax rather thin, gallantly declared, that he himself would, in his own person, and not as a procurator for others, put the next query to the Pythoness. He paused a minute — collected his rhimes, and thus addressed her:

CLAU D HALCRO.

“Mother doubtful, Mother dread,  
Dweller of the Fitful-head,  
Thou hast conn’d full many a rhyme,  
That lives upon the surge of time:  
Tell me, shall my lays be sung,  
Like Hacon’s of the golden tongue,  
Long after Halcro’s dead and gone?  
Or, shall Hialtland’s minstrel own  
One note to rival glorious John?”

The voice of the sybil immediately replied, from her sanctuary.

N O R N A.

“The infant loves the rattle’s noise;  
Age, double childhood, hath its toys;  
But different far the descant rings,  
As strikes a different hand the strings.



The eagle mounts the polar sky —  
 The Imber-goose, unskill'd to fly,  
 Must be content to glide along,  
 Where seal and sea-dog list his song."

Halcro bit his lip, shrugged his shoulders, and then, instantly recovering his good humour, and the ready, though slovenly power of extemporaneous composition, with which long habit had invested him, he gallantly rejoined,

"Be mine the Imber-goose to play,  
 And haunt lone cave and silent bay; —  
 The archer's aim so shall I shun —  
 So shall I 'scape the levell'd gun —  
 Content my verse's tuneless jingle,  
 With Thule's sounding tides to mingle,  
 While, to the ear of wondering wight,  
 Upon the distant headland's height,  
 Soften'd by murmur of the sea,  
 The rude sounds seem like harmony!"

As the little bard stepped back, with an alert gait, and satisfied air, general applause followed the spirited manner in which he had acquiesced in the doom which levelled him with an Imber-goose. But his resigned and courageous submis-



sion did' not even yet encourage any other person to consult the redoubted Norna.

«The coward fools!» said the Udaller. «Are you too afraid, Captain Cleveland, to speak to an old woman? — Ask her any thing — ask her whether the twelve-gun sloop at Kirkwall be your consort or no.»

Cleveland looked at Minna, and, probably conceiving that she watched with anxiety his answer to her father's question, he collected himself, after a moment's hesitation.

«I never was afraid of man or woman.— Master Halcro, you have heard the question which our host desires me to ask — put it in my name, and in your own way — I pretend to as little skill in poetry as I do in witchcraft.»

Halcro did not wait to be invited twice, but, grasping Captain Cleveland's hand in his, according to the form which the game prescribed, he put the query which the Udaller had dictated to the stranger, in the following words:

«Mother doubtful, Mother dread,  
Dweller of the Fitful-head,  
A gallant bark from far abroad,  
Saint Magnus hath her in his road,  
With guns and firelocks not a few —



A silken and a scarlet crew,  
 Deep stored with precious merchandize,  
 Of gold, and goods of rare device —  
 What hath this our comrade bold  
 Of interest in bark, goods, and gold?"

There was a pause of unusual duration ere the oracle would return any answer; and when she replied, it was in a lower, though an equally decided tone, with that which she had hitherto employed. —

N O R N A.

"Gold is ruddy, fair, and free,  
 Blood is crimson, and dark to see; —  
 I look'd out on Saint Magnus Bay,  
 And I saw a falcon that hath struck her prey, —  
 A gobbit of flesh in her beak she bore,  
 And talons and singles are dripping with gore;  
 Let he that asks after them look on his hand,  
 And if there is blood on't, he's one of their  
 band."

Cleveland smiled scornfully, and held out his hand, — "Few men have been on the Spanish Main as often as I have, without having had to do with the *Guarda Costas* once and again; but



there never was aught like a stain on my hand that a wet towel would not wipe away."

The Udaller added his voice potential — "There is never peace with Spaniards beyond the Line, — I have heard Captain Tragendeck and honest old Commodore Rummelaer say so an hundred times, and they have both been down in the Bay of Honduras, and all thereabouts. — I hate all Spaniards, since they came here and reft the Fair Isle men of their vivers in 1558. I have heard my grandfather speak of it; and there is an old Dutch history somewhere about the house, that shews what work they made in the Low Countries long since. — There is neither mercy nor faith in them."

"True — true, my old friend," said Cleveland; "they are as jealous of their Indian possessions as an old man of his young bride; and if they can catch you at disadvantage, the mines for your life is the word, — and so we fight them with our colours nailed to the mast."

"That is the way," shouted the Udaller; "the old British jack should never down. When I think of the wooden walls, I almost think myself an Englishman, only it would be becoming too like my Scots neighbours; — but come, no offence to any here, gentlemen — all are friends, and all are welcome. — Come, Brenda, go on with the



play—do you speak next, you have Norse rhymes enough we all know.”

“But none that suits the game we play at, father,” said Brenda, drawing back.

“Nonsense!” said her father, pushing her onward, while Halcro seized on her reluctant hand; “never let mistimed modesty mar honest mirth — Speak for Brenda, Halcro — it is your trade to interpret maidens’ thoughts.”

The poet bowed to the beautiful young woman with the devotion of a poet and the gallantry of a traveller, and having, in a whisper, reminded her that she was in no way responsible for the nonsense he was about to speak, he paused, looked upward, simpered as if he had caught a sudden idea, and at length set off in the following verses: —

#### CLAU D HALCRO.

“Mother doubtful, Mother dread —  
Dweller of the Fitful-head,  
Well thou know’st it is thy task  
To tell what Beauty will not ask; —  
Then steep thy words in wine and milk,  
And weave a doom of gold and silk, —  
For we would know, shall Brenda prove  
In love, and happy in her love?”



The prophetess replied almost immediately from behind her curtain: —

N O R N A.

“Untouch’d by love, the maiden’s breast  
Is like the snow on Rona’s crest,  
High seated in the middle sky,  
In bright and barren purity;  
But by the sunbeam gently kiss’d,  
Scarce by the gazing eye ’tis miss’d,  
Ere down the lonely valley stealing,  
Fresh grass and growth its course revealing,  
It cheers the flock, revives the flower,  
And decks some happy shepherd’s bower.”

“A comfortable doctrine, and most justly spoken,” said the Udaller, seizing the blushing Brenda, as she was endeavouring to escape — “never think shame for the matter, my girl. To be the mistress of some honest man’s house, and the means of maintaining some old Norse name, making neighbours happy, the poor easy, and relieving strangers, is the most creditable lot a young woman can look to, and I heartily wish it to all here. Come, who speaks next — good husbands are going — Maddie Groatsettar — my pretty Clara, come and have your share.”



The Lady Glowrowrum shook her head, and “could not,” she said, “altogether approve — — ”

“Enough said — enough said,” replied Magnus; “no compulsion; but the play shall go on till we are tired of it. Here, Minna — I have got you at command. Stand forth, my girl — there are plenty of things to be ashamed of besides old fashioned and innocent pleasantries — Come, I will speak for you myself — though I am not sure I can remember rhyme enough for it.”

There was a light colour which passed rapidly over Minna’s face, but she instantly regained her composure, and stood erect by her father, as one superior to any little jest to which her situation might give rise.

Her father, after some rubbing of his brow, and other mechanical efforts to assist his memory, at length recovered verse sufficient to put the following query though in less gallant strains than those of Halcyon —

“Mother speak, and do not tarry,  
Here’s a maiden fain would marry.  
Shall she marry, ay or not?  
If she marry, what’s her lot?”

A deep sigh was uttered within the tabernacle of the soothsayer, as if she compassionated the



subject of the doom which she was obliged to pronounce. She then, as usual, returned her response.

“Untouch’d by love, the maiden’s breast  
Is like the snow on Rona’s crest;  
So pure, so free from earthy dye,  
It seems, whilst leaning on the sky,  
Part of the heaven to which ’tis nigh;  
But passion, like the wild March rain,  
May soil the wreath with many a stain.  
We gaze — the lovely vision’s gone —  
A torrent fills the bed of stone,  
That hurrying to destruction’s shock,  
Leaps headlong from the lofty rock.”

The Udaller heard this reply with high resentment. “By the bones of the Martyr,” he said, his brave visage becoming suddenly ruddy, “this is an abuse of courtesy! and, were it any but yourself that had classed my daughter’s name and the word destruction together, they had better have left the word unspoken. But, come forth of the tent, thou old galdragon,” he added, with a smile — “I should have known that thou canst not long joy in any thing that smacks of mirth, God help thee.” His summons received no answer; and after waiting a moment, he again ad-



dressed her — «Nay, never be sullen with me, kinswoman, though I did speak a hasty word — thou knowest I bear malice to no one, least of all to thee — so come forth and let us shake hands. — Thou mightest have foretold the wreck of my ship and boats, or a bad herring-fishery, and I should have said never a word; but Minna or Brenda, you know, are things which touch me nearer. But come out, shake hands, and there let there be an end on't.»

Norna returned no answer whatever to his repeated invocations, and the company began to look upon each other with some surprise, when the Udaller, raising the skin which covered the entrance of the tent, discovered that the interior was empty. The wonder was now general, and not unmingled with fear; for it seemed impossible that Norna could have, in any manner, escaped from the tabernacle in which she was inclosed without having been discovered by the company. Gone, however, she was, and the Udaller, after a moment's consideration, dropt the skin-curtain again over the entrance of the tent.

«My friends,» he said, with a cheerful countenance, «we have long known my kinswoman, and that her ways are not like those of the ordinary folks of this world. But she means well by Hialtland, and hath the love of a sister for me, and for my house; and no guest of mine needs



either to fear evil, or to take offence at her hand. I have little doubt she will be with us at dinner time."

"Now, heaven forbid!" said Mrs Baby Yellowley — "for, my gude Leddy Glowrowrum, to tell your leddyship the truth, I likena cummers that can come and gae like a glance of the sun, or the whip of a whirlwind."

"Speak lower, speak lower," said the Lady Glowrowrum, "and be thankful that yon carlin hasna ta'en the house-side away wi' her. The like of her have played warse pranks, and so has she hersell, unless she is the sairer lied on."

Similar murmurs ran through the rest of the company, until the Udaller uplifted his stentorian and imperative voice to put them to silence, and invited, or rather commanded, the attendance of his guests to behold the boats set off for the *haaf* or deep-sea fishing.

"The wind had been high since sunrise," he said, "and had kept the boats in the bay, but now it was favourable, and they would sail immediately."

This sudden alteration of the weather occasioned sundry nods and winks amongst the guests, who were not indisposed to connect it with Norna's sudden disappearance; but without giving vent to observations which could not



but be disagreeable to their host, they followed his stately step to the shore, as the herd of deer follows the leading stag, with all manner of respectful observance.





## CHAPTER XXII.

*There was a laughing devil in his sneer,  
That raised emotions both of rage and fear;  
And where his frown of hatred darkly fell,  
Hope withering fled — and Mercy sigh'd fare-  
well.*

*The Corsair, Canto I.*

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THE ling or white fishery is the principal employment of the natives of Zetland, and was formerly that upon which the gentry chiefly depended for their income, and the poor for their subsistence. The fishing season is, therefore, like the harvest of an agricultural country, the busiest and most important, as well as the most animating period of the year.

The fishermen of each district assemble at particular stations, with their boats and crews, and erect upon the shore small huts, composed of



shingle, and covered with turf, for their temporary lodging, and skeos, or drying-houses, for the fish; so that the lonely beach at once assumes the appearance of an Indian town. The banks to which they repair for the haaf fishing are often many miles distant from the station where the fish is dried; so that they are always twenty or thirty hours absent, frequently longer, and under unfavourable circumstances of wind and tide, they remain at sea with a very small stock of provisions, and in a boat of a construction which seems extremely slender, for two or three days, and are sometimes heard of no more. The departure of the fishers, therefore, on this occupation, has in it a character of danger and of suffering, which renders it dignified, and the anxiety of the females who remain on the beach, watching the departure of the lessening boat, or anxiously looking out for its return, gives pathos to the scene. \*

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\* Dr Edmondston, the ingenious author of a View of the Ancient and Present State of the Zetland Islands, has placed this part of the subject in an interesting light. "It is truly painful to witness the anxiety and distress which the wives of these poor men suffer on the approach of a storm. Regardless of fatigue, they leave their homes, and fly to the



The scene, therefore, was in busy and anxious animation, when the Udaller and his friends appeared on the beach. The various crews of about thirty boats, amounting each to from three to five or six men, were taking leave of their wives and female relatives, and jumping on board their long Norway skiffs, where their lines and tackle lay ready stowed. Magnus was not an idle spectator

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spot where they expect their husbands to land, or ascend the summit of a rock, to look out for them on the bosom of the deep. Should they get the glimpse of a sail, they watch, with trembling solicitude, its alternate rise and disappearance on the waves; and though often tranquillized by the safe arrival of the objects of their search, yet it sometimes is their lot 'to hail the bark that never can return.' Subject to the influence of a variable climate, and engaged on a sea naturally tempestuous, with rapid currents, scarcely a season passes over without the occurrence of some fatal accident or hairbreadth escape." — *View, etc. of the Zetland Islands*, vol. I. p. 238. Many interesting particulars respecting the fisheries and agriculture of Zetland, as well as its antiquities, may be found in the work we have quoted.



of the scene; he went from one place to another inquiring into the state of their provisions for the voyage, and their preparations for the fishing — now and then, with a rough Dutch or Norse oath, abusing them for blockheads, for going to sea with their boats indifferently found, but always ending by ordering from his own stores a gallon of gin, a lispund of meal, or some similar essential addition to their sea-stores. The hardy sailors, on receiving such favours, expressed their thanks in the brief gruff manner that their landlord best approved; but the women were more clamorous in their gratitude, which Magnus was often obliged to silence by cursing all female tongues from Eve's downwards.

At length all were on board and ready, the sails were hoisted, the signal for departure given, the rowers began to pull, and all started from the shore, in strong emulation to get first to the fishing ground, and to have their lines set before the rest; an exploit to which no little consequence was attached by the boat's crew who should be happy enough to perform it.

While they were yet within hearing of the shore, they chaunted an ancient Norse ditty, appropriate to the occasion, of which Claud Halcro had executed the following literal translation:



„Farewell, merry maidens, to dance, song, and  
laugh,

For the brave lads of Westra are bound to the  
Haaf;

And we must have labour, and hunger, and  
pain,

Ere we dance with the maids of Dunrossness  
again.

„For now, in our trim boats of Noroway deal,  
We must dance on the waves, with the porpuss  
and seal.

The breeze it shall pipe, so it pipe not too high,  
And the gull be our songstress whene'er she  
flits by.

„Sing on, my brave bird, while we follow, like  
thee,

By bank, shoal, and quicksand, the swarms of  
the sea;

And when twenty-score fishes are straining my  
line,

Sing louder, brave bird, for their spoils shall  
be thine.

„We'll sing while we bait, and we'll sing when  
we haul,

For the deeps of the Haaf have enough for us  
all:



There is torsk for the gentle, and skate for the  
carle,

And there's wealth for bold Magnus, the son of  
the earl.

«Huzza! my brave comrades, give way for the  
Haaf,

We shall sooner come back to the dance and  
the laugh;

For life without mirth is a lamp without oil;

Then, mirth and long life to the bold Magnus  
Troil!»

The rude words of the song were soon drowned in the ripple of the waves, but the tune continued long to mingle with the sound of wind and sea, and the boats were like so many black specks on the surface of the ocean, diminishing by degrees as they bore far and farther seaward; while the ear could distinguish touches of the human voice, almost drowned amid that of the elements.

The fishermen's wives looked their last after the parting sails, and were now departing slowly, with downcast and anxious looks, towards the huts in which they were to make arrangements for preparing and drying the fish, with which they hoped to see their husbands and friends return deeply loaded. Here and there an old sybil displayed the superior importance of



her experience, by predicting, from the appearance of the atmosphere, that the wind would be fair or foul, while others recommended a vow to the Kirk of Saint Ninian's, for the safety of their men and boats, (an ancient Catholic superstition, not yet wholly abolished;) and others, but in a low and timorous tone, regretted to their companions, that Norna of Fitful-head had been suffered to depart in discontent that morning from Burgh-Westra, «and, of all days that were in the year, that they suld have contrived to give her displeasure on the first day of the white fishing !”

The gentry, guests of Magnus Troil, having whiled away as much time as could be so disposed of, in viewing the little armament set sail, and in conversing with the poor women who had seen their friends embark in it, began now to separate into various groups and parties, which strolled in different directions, as fancy led them, to enjoy what may be called the clear obscure of a Zetland summer day, which, though wanting the brilliant sunshine that cheers other countries during the fine season, has a mild and pleasing character of its own, which softens while it saddens landscapes, which, in their own lonely, bare, and monotonous tone, have something in them stern as well as barren.

In one of the loneliest recesses of the coast,



where a deep indenture of the rocks gave the tide access to the cavern, or, as it is called, the *Helyer* of Swartaster, Minna Troil was walking with Captain Cleveland. They had chosen probably that walk, as being little liable to interruption from others; for as the force of the tide rendered the place unfit either for fishing or sailing, so it was not the ordinary resort of walkers, on account of its being the supposed habitation of a Mermaid, a race which Norwegian superstition invests with magical as well as mischievous qualities. Here, therefore, Minna wandered with her lover.

A small spot of milk-white sand, that stretched beneath one of the precipices which walled in the creek on either side, afforded them space for a dry, firm, and pleasant walk of about an hundred yards, terminated at one extremity by a dark stretch of the bay, which, scarce touched by the wind, seemed almost as smooth as glass, and which was seen from between two lofty rocks, the jaws of the creek, or indenture, which approached each other above, as if they wished to meet over the dark tide that separated them. The other end of their promenade was closed by a lofty and almost unscaleable precipice, the abode of hundreds of sea-fowl of different kinds, in the bottom of which the huge helyer, or sea-cave, itself yawned, as if for the purpose of swallowing up the advancing tide, which it seemed to receive



into an abyss of immeasurable depth and extent. The entrance to this dismal cavern consisted not in a single arch, as usual, but was divided into two, by a huge pillar of natural rock, which, rising out of the sea, and extending to the top of the cavern, seemed to lend its support to the roof, and thus formed a double portal to the helyer, on which the fishermen and peasants had bestowed the rude name of the Devil's Nostrils. In this wild scene, lonely and undisturbed but by the clang of the sea-fowl, Cleveland had already met with Minna Troil more than once; for with her it was a favourite walk, as the objects which it presented agreed peculiarly with her love of the wild, the melancholy, and the wonderful. But now the conversation in which she was earnestly engaged, was such as entirely to withdraw her attention, as well as that of her companion, from the scenery around them.

"You cannot deny it," she said; "you have given way to feelings respecting this young man which indicate prejudice and violence, — the prejudice unmerited, as far as you are concerned at least, and the violence equally imprudent and unjustifiable."

"I should have thought," replied Cleveland, "that the service I rendered him yesterday might have freed me from such a charge. I do not talk of my own risk, for I have lived in danger, and



love it; it is not every one, however, would have ventured so near the furious animal to save one with whom they had no connection."

"It is not every one, indeed, who could have done so," answered Minna, gravely; "but it is every one who has courage and generosity. The giddy-brained Claud Halcro would have done as much as you, had his strength been equal to his courage, — my father would have done as much, though having such just cause of resentment against the young man, for his vain and braggart abuse of our hospitality. Do not, therefore, boast of your exploit too much, my good friend, lest you should make me think that it required too great an effort. I know you love not Mordaunt Mertoun, though you exposed your own life to save his."

"Will you allow nothing, then," said Cleveland, "for the long misery I was made to endure from the common and prevailing report, that this beardless bird-hunter stood betwixt me and what I on earth coveted most — the affections of Minna Troil?"

He spoke in a tone at once impassioned and insinuating, and his whole language and manner seemed to express a grace and elegance, which formed the most striking contrast with the speech and gesture of the unpolished seaman, which he



usually affected or exhibited. But his apology was unsatisfactory to Minna.

“You have known,” she said, “perhaps too soon, and too well, how little you had to fear, — if you indeed feared, — that Mertoun, or any other, had interest with Minna Troil. — Nay, truce to thanks and protestations; I would accept it as the best proof of gratitude, that you would be reconciled with this youth, or at least avoid every quarrel with him.”

“That we should be friends, Minna, is impossible,” replied Cleveland; “even the love I bear you, the most powerful emotion that my heart ever knew, cannot work that miracle.”

“And why, I pray you?” said Minna; “there have been no evil offices between you, but rather an exchange of mutual services; why can you not be friends? — I have many reasons to wish it.”

“And can you then forget the slights which he has cast upon Brenda, and on yourself, and on your father’s house?”

“I can forgive them all,” said Minna; — “can you not say so much, who have in truth received no offence?”

Cleveland looked down, and paused for an instant, then raised his head and replied, “I might easily deceive you, Minna, and promise you what my soul tells me is an impossibility; but I am forced to use too much deceit with others, and



with you I will use none. I cannot be friend to this young man; — there is a natural dislike — an instinctive aversion — a something like a principle of repugnance in our mutual nature, which makes us odious to each other. Ask himself — he will tell you he has the same antipathy against me. The obligation he conferred on me was a bridle to my resentment; but I was so galled by the restraint, that I could have gnawed the curb til my lips were bloody.”

“You have worn what you are wont to call your iron mask so long, that your features,” replied Minna, “retain the impression of its rigidity, even when it is removed.”

“You do me injustice, Minna,” replied her lover, “and you are angry with me because I deal with you plainly and honestly. Plainly and honestly, however, will I say, that I cannot be Mertoun’s friend, but it shall be his own fault, not mine, if I am ever his enemy. I seek not to injure him, but do not ask me to love him. And of this remain satisfied, that it would be vain even if I could do so; for as sure as I attempted any advances towards his confidence, so sure would I be to awaken his disgust and suspicion. Leave us to the exercise of our natural feelings, which, as they will unquestionably keep us as far separate as possible, are most likely to pre-



vent any possible interference with each other. — Does this satisfy you?"

"It must," said Minna, "since you tell me there is no remedy. — And now tell me why you looked so grave when you heard of your consort's arrival, for that it is her I have no doubt, in the port of Kirkwall?"

"I fear," replied Cleveland, "the consequences of that vessel's arrival with her crew, as comprehending the ruin of my fondest hopes. I had made some progress in your father's favour, and, with time, might have made more, when hither come Allured and Hawkins to blight my prospects for ever. I told you on what terms we parted. I then commanded a vessel braver and better found than their own, with a crew who, at my slightest nod, would have faced fiends armed with their own fiery element; but I now stand alone, a single man, destitute of all means to overawe or to restrain them; and they will soon shew so plainly the ungovernable license of their habits and dispositions, that ruin to themselves and me will in all probability be the consequence."

"Do not fear it," said Minna; "my father can never be so unjust as to hold you liable for the offences of others."

"But what will Magnus Troil say to my own, fair Minna?" said Cleveland, smiling.



“My father is a Norwegian,” said Minna, “one of an oppressed race, who will not care whether you fought against the Spaniards, who are the tyrants of the New World, or against the Dutch and English, who have succeeded to their usurped dominions. His own ancestors supported and exercised the freedom of the seas in those gallant barks, whose pennons were the dread of all Europe.”

“I fear, nevertheless,” said Cleveland, smiling, “that the descendant of an ancient Sea-King will scarce acknowledge a fitting acquaintance in a modern rover. I have not disguised from you that I have reason to fear the English laws; and Magnus, though a great enemy to taxes, imposts, scatt, wattle, and so forth, has no idea of latitude upon points of a more general character; — he would willingly reeve a rope to the yard-arm for the benefit of an unfortunate buccaneer.”

“Do not suppose so,” said Minna; “he himself suffers too much oppression from the tyrannical laws of our proud neighbours of Scotland. I trust he will soon be able to rise in resistance against them. The enemy — such I will call them — are now divided amongst themselves, and every vessel from their coast brings intelligence of fresh commotions — the Highlands against the Lowlands — the Williamites against the Jacobites — the Whigs against the Tories, and, to sum the whole,



the kingdom of England against that of Scotland. What is there, as Claud Halcro well hinted, to prevent our availing ourselves of the quarrels of these robbers, to assert the independence of which we are deprived?"

"To hoist the raven standard on the Castle of Scalloway," said Cleveland, in imitation of her tone and manner, "and proclaim your father Earl Magnus the First!"

"Earl Magnus the Seventh, if it please you," replied Minna; "for six of his ancestors have worn the coronet before him. — You laugh at my ardour, — but what is there to prevent all this?"

"Nothing *will* prevent it," replied Cleveland, "because it will never be attempted — Any thing *might* prevent it, that is equal in strength to the long-boat of a British man-of-war."

"You treat us with scorn, sir," replied Minna; "yet yourself should know what a few resolved men may perform."

"But they must be armed, Minna," replied Cleveland, "and willing to place their lives upon each desperate adventure. — Think not of such visions. Denmark has been cut down into a second-rate kingdom, incapable of exchanging a single broadside with England; and, in these islands, the love of independence has been suppressed by a long term of subjection, or shews itself but in a few muttered growls over the bowl



and bottle. — And, were your men as willing warriors as their ancestors, what could the unarmed crews of a few fishing-boats do against the British navy? — Think no more of it, sweet Minna — it is a dream, and I must term it so, though it makes your eye so bright, and your step so noble.”

“It is indeed a dream!” said Minna, looking down, “and it ill becomes a daughter of Hialtland to look or to move like a free woman — Our eye should be on the ground, and our step slow and reluctant, as that of one who obeys a task-master.”

“There are lands,” said Cleveland, “in which the eye may look bright upon groves of the palm and the cocoa, and where the foot may move light as a galley under sail, over fields carpetted with flowers, and savannahs surrounded by aromatic thickets, and where subjection is unknown, except that of the brave to the bravest, and of all to the most beautiful.”

Minna paused a moment ere she replied, and then answered, “No, Cleveland. My own rude country has charms for me, even desolate as you think it, and depressed as it surely is, which no other land on earth can present to me. I endeavour in vain to represent to myself those visions of trees, and of groves, which my eye never saw; but my imagination can conceive no sight in nature more sublime than those waves, when agita-



ted by a storm, or more beautiful, than when they come, as they now do, rolling in calm tranquillity to the shore. Not the fairest scene in a foreign land, — not the brightest sun-beam that ever shone upon the richest landscape, would win my thoughts for a moment from that lofty rock, misty hill, and wide-rolling ocean. Hialtland is the land of my deceased ancestors, and of my living father; and in Hialtland will I live and die.”

“Then in Hialtland,” answered Cleveland, “will I too live and die. I will not go to Kirkwall, — I will not make my existence known to my comrades, from whom it were else hard for me to escape. Your father loves me, Minna; who knows whether long attention, anxious care might not bring him to receive me into his family. Who would regard the length of a voyage that was certain to terminate in happiness?”

“Dream not of such an issue,” said Minna; “it is impossible. While you live in my father’s house, — while you receive his assistance, and share his table, you will find him the generous friend, and the hearty host; but touch him on what concerns his name and family, and the frank-hearted Udaller will start up before you the haughty and proud descendant of a Norwegian Jarl. See you, a moment’s suspicion has fallen on Mordaunt Mertoun, and he has banished from his favour the youth whom he so lately loved



as a son. No one must ally with his house that is not of unstained northern descent."

"And mine may be so, for aught that is known to me upon the subject," said Cleveland.

"How!" said Minna; "have you any reason to believe yourself of Norse descent?"

"I have told you before," replied Cleveland, "that my family is totally unknown to me. I spent my earliest days upon a solitary plantation, in the little island of Tortuga, under the charge of my father, then a different person from what he afterwards became. We were plundered by the Spaniards, and reduced to such extremity of poverty, that my father, in desperation, and in thirst of revenge, took up arms, and having become chief of a little band, who were in the same circumstances, became a buccaneer, as it is called, and cruized against Spain, with various vicissitudes of good and bad fortune, until, while he interfered to check some violence of his companions, he fell by their hands — no uncommon fate among the captains of these rovers. But whence my father came, or what was the place of his birth, I know not, fair Minna, nor have I ever had a curious thought on the subject."

"He was a Briton, at least, your unfortunate father?" said Minna.

"I have no doubt of it," said Cleveland; "his name, which I have rendered too formidable to



be openly spoken, is an English one; and his acquaintance with the English language, and even with English literature, together with the pains which he took, in better days, to teach me both, plainly spoke him to be an Englishman. If the rude bearing which I display towards others is not the genuine character of my mind and manners, it is to my father, Minna, that I owe any share of better thoughts and principles, which may render me worthy, in some small degree, of your notice and approbation. And yet it sometimes seems to me, that I have two different characters; for I cannot almost believe, that I, who now walk this lone beach with the lovely Minna Troil, and am permitted to speak to her of the passion which I have cherished, have ever been the daring leader of the bold band whose name was as terrible as a tornado."

"You had not been permitted," said Minna, "to use that bold language towards the daughter of Magnus Troil, had you *not* been the brave and undaunted leader, who, with so small means, has made his name so formidable. My heart is like that of a maiden of the ancient days, and is to be won, not by fair words, but by gallant deeds."

"Alas! that heart," said Cleveland; "and what is it that I may do — what is it that man can do, to win in it the interest which I desire?"



“Rejoin your friends — pursue your fortunes — leave the rest to destiny,” said Minna. “Should you return, the leader of a gallant fleet, who can tell what may befall?”

“And what shall assure me, that, when I return — if return I ever shall — I may not find Minna Troil a bride or a spouse? — No, Minna, I will not trust to destiny the only object worth attaining, which my stormy voyage in life has yet offered me.”

“Hear me,” said Minna. “I will bind myself to you, if you dare accept such an engagement, by the promise of Odin, the most sacred of our northern rites which are yet practised amongst us, that I will never favour another, until you resign the pretensions which I have given to you. — Will that satisfy you? — for more I cannot — more I will not give.”

“Then with that,” said Cleveland, after a moment’s pause, “I must perforce be satisfied; — but remember, it is yourself that threw me back upon a mode of life which the laws of Britain denounce as criminal, and which the violent passions of the daring men by whom it is pursued, have rendered infamous.”

“But I,” said Minna, “am superior to such prejudices. In warring with England, I see their laws in no other light than as if you were engaged with an enemy, who, in fulness of pride and



power, has declared he will give his antagonist no quarter. A brave man will not fight the worse of this; — and, for the manners of your comrades, so that they do not infect your own, why should their evil report attach to you?"

Cleveland gazed at her as she spoke, with a degree of wondering admiration, in which, at the same time, there lurked a smile at her simplicity.

"I could not," he said, "have believed, that such high courage could have been found united with such ignorance of the world, as the world is now wielded. For my manners, they who best know me will readily allow, that I have done my best, at the risk of my popularity, and of my life itself, to mitigate the ferocity of my mates; but how can you teach humanity to men burning with vengeance against the world, by whom they are proscribed, or learn them temperance and moderation in enjoying the pleasures which chance throws in their way, to vary a life which would be otherwise one constant scene of peril and hardship? But this promise, Minna — this promise, which is all I am to receive in guerdon for my faithful attachment — let me at least lose no time in claiming it."

"It must not be rendered here, but in Kirkwall. — We must invoke, to witness the engagement, the Spirit which presides over the ancient circle of Stennis. But perhaps you fear to name



the ancient Father of the Slain too, the Severe, the Terrible."

Cleveland smiled.

"Do me the justice to think, lovely Minna, that I am little subject to fear real causes of terror; and for those which are visionary, I have no sympathy whatsoever."

"You believe not in them, then," said Minna, "and are so far better suited to be Brenda's lover than mine."

"I will believe," replied Cleveland, "in whatever you believe. The whole inhabitants of that Valhalla, about which you converse so much with that fiddling, rhiming fool, Claud Halcro — all these shall become living and existing things to my credulity. But, Minna, do not ask me to fear any of them."

"Fear! no — not to *fear* them, surely," replied the maiden; "for, not before Thor or Odin, when they approached in the fulness of their terrors, did the heroes of my dauntless race yield one foot in retreat. But when you make this boast, bethink you that you defy an enemy of a kind you have never yet encountered."

"Not in these northern latitudes," said the lover, with a smile, "where hitherto I have seen but angels; but I have faced, in my time, the demons of the Equinoctial Line, which we rovers suppose



to be as powerful, and as malignant, as those of the North."

"Have you then witnessed those wonders that are beyond the visible world?" said Minna, with some degree of awe.

Cleveland composed his countenance, and replied, — "A short while before my father's death, I came, though then very young, into the command of a sloop, manned with thirty as desperate fellows as ever handled a musket. We cruized for a long while with bad success, taking nothing but wretched small-craft, which were destined to catch turtle, or otherwise loaded with coarse and worthless trumpery. I had much ado to prevent my comrades from avenging upon the crews of those baubling shallops the disappointment which they had occasioned to us. At length, we grew desperate, and made a descent on a village where we were told we should intercept the mules of a certain Spanish governor, laden with treasure. We succeeded in carrying the place; but while I endeavoured to save the inhabitants from the fury of my followers, the muleteers, with their precious cargo, escaped into the neighbouring woods. This filled up the measure of my unpopularity. My people, who had been long discontented, became openly mutinous. I was deposed from my command, in solemn council, and condemned, as having too little luck and too much



humanity for the profession I had undertaken . to be marooned , \* as the phrase goes , on one of those little sandy, bushy islets , which are called, in the West Indies, keys, and which are frequented only by turtle and by sea fowl. Many of them are supposed to be haunted — some by the demons worshipped by the old inhabitants — others by Caciques and others , whom the Spaniards had put to death by torture, to compel them to discover their hidden treasures, and others by the various spectres in which sailors of all nations have implicit faith. My place of banishment , called Coffin - key, about two leagues and a half to the south-east of Bermudas , was so infamous as the resort of these supernatural inhabitants , that I believe the wealth of Mexico would not have persuaded the bravest of the scoundrels who put me ashore there , to have spent an hour on the islet alone , even in broad day-light ; and when they rowed off, they pulled for the sloop like men that dared not cast their eyes behind them. And there they left me to subsist myself as I might , on a speck of unproductive sand , surrounded by the boundless Atlantic, and haunted , as they supposed , by malignant demons."

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\* To *maroon* a seaman, signified to abandon him on a desolate coast or istand—a piece of cruelty often practised by Pirates and Buccaneers.



“And what was the consequence?” said Minna, eagerly.

“I supported life,” said the adventurer, “at the expence of such sea-fowl as were silly enough to let me approach so near as to knock them down with a stick; and by means of turtle eggs, when these complaisant birds became better acquainted with the mischievous disposition of the human species, and more shy of course of my advances.”

“And the demons of whom you spoke?” — continued Minna.

“I had my secret apprehensions upon their account,” said Cleveland: “In open day-light, or in absolute darkness, I did not greatly apprehend their approach; but in the misty dawn of the morning, or when evening was about to fall, I saw, for the first week of my abode on the key, many a dim and undefined spectre, — now resembling a Spaniard, with his capa wrapped around him, and his huge sombrero, as large as an umbrella, upon his head, — now a Dutch sailor, with his rough cap and trunk-hose, — and now an Indian Cacique, with his feathery crown and long lance of cane.”

“Did you not approach and address them?” said Minna.

“I always approached them,” replied the seaman; “but, — I grieve to disappoint your expectations, my fair friend, — whenever I drew near



them the phantom changed into a bush, or a piece of drift-wood, or a wreath of mist, or some such cause of deception, until at last I was taught by experience to cheat myself no longer with such visions, and continued a solitary inhabitant of Coffin-key, as little alarmed by visionary terrors, as I ever was in the great cabin of a stout vessel, with a score of companions around me."

"You cheated me into listening to a tale of nothing," said Minna; "but how long did you continue on the island?"

"Four weeks of miserable existence," said Cleveland, "when I was relieved by the crew of a vessel which came thither a-turtling. Yet my miserable seclusion was not entirely useless to me, for on that spot of barren sand I found the iron mask, which has since been my chief security against treason, or mutiny of my followers. It was there I formed the resolution to seem no softer hearted, nor better instructed — no more humane, and no more scrupulous, than those with whom fortune had leagued me. I thought over my former story, and saw that seeming more brave, skilful, and enterprizing than others, had gained me command and respect, and that seeming more gently nurtured, and more civilized than they, had made them envy and hate me as a being of another species. I agreed with myself, then, that since I could not lay aside my supe-



riority of intellect and education, I would do my best to disguise, and to sink in the rude seaman, all appearance of better feeling and better accomplishments. I foresaw then what has since happened, that, under the appearance of daring obduracy, I should acquire such a habitual command over my followers, that I might use it for the ensurance of discipline, and for relieving the distresses of the wretches who fell under our power. I saw, in short, that, to attain authority, I must assume the external semblance, at least, of those over whom it was to be exercised. The tidings of my father's fate, while it excited me to wrath and to revenge, confirmed the resolution I had adopted. He also had fallen a victim to his superiority of mind, morals, and manners, above those whom he commanded. They were wont to call him the Gentleman; and, unquestionably, they thought he waited some favourable opportunity to reconcile himself, perhaps at their expence, with those existing forms of society with which his habits seemed best to suit, and, even therefore, they murdered him. Nature and justice alike called on me for revenge. I was soon at the head of a new body of the adventurers, who are so numerous in those islands. I sought not after those by whom I had been myself marooned, but after the wretches who had betrayed my father; and on them I took a revenge so severe,



that it was of itself sufficient to stamp me with the character of that inexorable ferocity which I was desirous to be thought to possess, and which, perhaps, was gradually coming on my disposition in actual earnest. My manner, speech, and conduct, seemed so totally changed, that those who formerly knew me were disposed to ascribe the alteration to my intercourse with the demons who haunted the sands of Coffin-key; nay, there were some, superstitious enough to believe that I had actually formed a league with them."

"I tremble to hear the rest!" said Minna; "did you not become the monster of courage and cruelty whose character you assumed?"

"If I have escaped being so, it is to you, Minna," replied Cleveland, "that the wonder must be ascribed. It is true, I have always endeavoured to distinguish myself rather by acts of the most adventurous valour, than by schemes of revenge or of plunder, and that at length I could save lives by a rude jest, and sometimes, by the excess of the measures which I myself proposed, could induce those under me to intercede in favour of prisoners; so that the seeming severity of my character has better served the cause of humanity, than had I appeared directly devoted to it."

He ceased, and, as Minna replied not a word, both remained silent for a little space, when Cleveland again resumed the discourse: —



“You are silent,” he said, “Miss Troil, and I have injured myself in your opinion by the frankness with which I have laid my character before you. I may truly say that my natural disposition has been controlled, but not altered, by the untoward circumstances in which I am placed.”

“I am uncertain,” said Minna, after a moment’s consideration, “whether you had been thus candid, had you not known I should soon see your comrades, and discover from their conversation and their manners what you would otherwise gladly have concealed.”

“You do me injustice, Minna, cruel injustice. From the instant that you knew me to be a sailor of fortune, an adventurer, a buccaneer, or, if you will have the broad word, a PIRATE, what had you to expect less than what I have told you?”

“You speak too truly,” said Minna — “all this I might have anticipated, and I know not how I should have expected it otherwise. But it seemed to me that a war on the cruel and superstitious Spaniards had in it something ennobling — something that refined the fierce employment to which you have just now given its true and dreaded name. I thought that the independent warriors of the Western Ocean, raised up, as it were, to punish the wrongs of so many murdered and plundered tribes, must have had something



of noble elevation, like the Sons of the North, whose long galleys avenged on so many coasts the oppressions of degenerate Rome. This I thought, and this I dreamed — I grieve that I am awakened and undeceived. Yet I blame you not for the erring of my own fancy. — Farewell, we must now part.”

“Say at least,” said Cleveland, “that you do not hold me in horror for having told you the truth.”

“I must have time for reflection,” said Minna, “time to weigh what you have said, ere I can fully understand my own feelings. Thus much, however, I can say even now, that he who pursues the wicked purpose of plunder, by means of blood and cruelty, and who must veil his remains of natural remorse under an affectation of superior profligacy, is not, and cannot be, the lover whom Minna Troil expected to find in Cleveland; and if she still love him, it must be as a penitent, and not as a hero.”

So saying, she extricated herself from his grasp, (for he still endeavoured to detain her,) making an imperative sign to him to forbear from following her. — “She is gone,” said Cleveland, looking after her; “wild and fanciful as she is, I was unprepared for this. — She startled not at the name of my perilous course of life, yet seems totally unprepared for the evil which must necessarily at-



tend it; and so all the merit I have gained with my resemblance to a Norse Champion, or King of the Sea, is to be lost at once, because a gang of pirates do not prove to be a choir of saints. I would that Rackam, Hawkins, and the rest, had been at the bottom of the Race of Portland — I would the Pentland Firth had swept them to hell rather than to Orkney! I will not, however, quit the chase of this angel for all that these fiends can do. I will — I must to Orkney before the Udal-ler makes his voyage thither — our meeting might alarm even his blunt understanding, although, thank Heaven, in this wild country, men know the nature of our trade only by hearsay, through our honest friends the Dutch, who take care never to speak very ill of those they make money by. — Well, if fortune would but stand my friend with this beautiful enthusiast, I would pursue her wheel no further at sea, but set myself down amongst these rocks, as happy as if they were so many groves of bananas and palmettoes.”

With these, and such thoughts, half rolling in his bosom, half expressed in indistinct hints and murmurs, the pirate Cleveland returned to the mansion of Burgh-Westra.



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## CHAPTER XXIII.

*There was shaking of hands, and sorrow of heart,*

*For the hour was approaching when merry folks must part;*

*So we call'd for our horses, and ask'd for our way,*

*While the jolly old landlord said, «Nothing's to pay.»*

### *Liliput, a Poem.*

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**W**E do not dwell upon the festivities of the day, which had nothing in them to interest the reader particularly. The table groaned under the usual plenty, which was disposed of by the guests with the usual appetite — the bowl of punch was filled and emptied with the same celerity as usual — the men quaffed, and the women laughed — Claud Halcro rhimed, punned, and praised



John Dryden — the Udaller bumpered and sung choruses — and the evening concluded, as usual, in the Rigging-loft, as it was Magnus Troil's pleasure to term the dancing apartment.

It was then and there that Cleveland, approaching Magnus, where he sat betwixt his two daughters, intimated his intention of going to Kirkwall in a small brig, which Bryce Snaelsfoot, who had disposed of his goods with unprecedented celerity, had freighted thither, to procure a supply.

Magnus heard the sudden proposal of his guest with surprise, not unmingled with displeasure, and demanded sharply of Cleveland, how long it was since he had learned to prefer Bryce Snaelsfoot's company to his own. Cleveland answered, with his usual bluntness of manner, that time and tide tarried for no one, and that he had his own particular reasons for making his trip to Kirkwall sooner than the Udaller proposed to set sail — that he hoped to meet with him and his daughters at the great fair, which was now closely approaching, and might perhaps find it possible to return to Zetland along with them.

While he spoke this, Brenda kept her eye as much upon her sister as it was possible to do, without exciting general observation. She remarked, that Minna's pale cheek became yet paler while Cleveland spoke, and that she seemed, by compressing her lips, and slightly knitting her



brows, to be in the act of repressing the effects of strong interior emotion. But she spoke not; and when Cleveland, having bidden adieu to the Udaller, approached to salute her, as was then the custom, she received his farewell without trusting herself to attempt a reply.

Brenda had her own trial approaching; for Mordaunt Mertoun, once so much loved by her father, was now in the act of making his cold parting from him, without receiving a single look of friendly regard. There was, indeed, sarcasm in the tone with which Magnus wished the youth a good journey, and recommended to him, if he met a bonny lass by the way, not to dream that she was in love, because she chanced to laugh at him. Mertoun coloured at what he felt as an insult, though it was but half intelligible to him; but he remembered Brenda, and suppressed every feeling of resentment. He proceeded to take his leave of the sisters. Minna, whose heart was considerably softened towards him, received his farewell with some degree of interest; but Brenda's was so visible in the kindness of her manner, and the moisture which gathered in her eye, that it was noticed even by the Udaller, who exclaimed, half-angrily, «Why, ay, lass, that may be right enow, for he was an old acquaintance; but mind! I have no will that he remain one.»



Mertoun, who was slowly leaving the apartment, half overheard this disparaging observation, and half turned round to resent it. But his purpose failed him when he saw that Brenda had been obliged to have recourse to her handkerchief to hide her emotion, and the sense that it was excited by his departure, obliterated every thought of her father's unkindness. He retired, — the other guests followed his example; and many of them, like Cleveland and himself, took their leave over-night, with the purpose of commencing their homeward journey on the succeeding morning.

That night, the mutual sorrow of Minna and Brenda, if it could not wholly remove the reserve which had estranged the sisters from each other, at least melted all its frozen and unkindly symptoms. They wept in each other's arms; and though neither spoke, yet each became dearer to the other; because they felt that the grief which called forth these drops had a source common to them both.

It is probable, that though Brenda's tears were most abundant, the grief of Minna was most deeply seated; for long after the younger had sobbed herself asleep, like a child, upon her sister's bosom, Minna lay awake, watching the dubious twilight, while tear after tear slowly gathered in her eye, and found a current down her



cheek, as soon as it became too heavy to be supported by her long black silken eye-lashes. As she lay, bewildered among the sorrowful thoughts which supplied these tears, she was surprised to distinguish, beneath the window, the sounds of music. At first she supposed it was some freak of Claud Halcro, whose fantastic humour sometimes indulged itself in such serenades. But it was not the *gue* of the old minstrel, but the guitar which she heard; an instrument which none in the island knew how to touch except Cleveland, who had learned, in his intercourse with the South American Spaniards, to play on it with superior execution. Perhaps it was in these climates also that he had learned the song, which, though he now sung it under the window of a maiden of Thule, had certainly never been composed for the native of a climate so northerly and so severe, since it spoke of productions of the earth and skies which are there unknown.

1.

Love wakes and weeps  
 While Beauty sleeps!  
 O for Music's softest numbers,  
 To prompt a theme,  
 For Beauty's dream,  
 Soft as the pillow of her slumbers.



2.

«Through groves of palm  
 Sigh gales of balm,  
 Fire-flies on the air are wheeling;  
 While through the gloom  
 Comes soft perfume,  
 The distant beds of flowers revealing.

3.

«O wake and live,  
 No dream can give  
 A shadow'd bliss, the real excelling;  
 No longer sleep,  
 From lattice peep,  
 And list the tale that Love is telling.»

The voice of Cleveland was deep, rich, and manly, and accorded well with the Spanish air, to which the words, probably a translation from the same language, had been adapted. His invocation would not probably have been fruitless, could Minna have arisen without awakening her sister. But that was impossible; for Brenda, who, as we already mentioned, had wept bitterly before she had sunk into repose, now lay with her face on her sister's neck, and one arm stretched around her, in the attitude of a child which has cried itself asleep in the arms of her nurse.



It was impossible for Minna to extricate herself from her grasp without awaking her; and she could not, therefore, execute her hasty purpose, of donning her gown, and hastening to the window to speak with Cleveland, who, she had no doubt, had resorted to this contrivance, to procure an interview. The restraint was sufficiently provoking, for it was more than probable that her lover came to take his last farewell; but that Brenda, inimical as she seemed to be of late towards Cleveland, should awake and witness it, was a thought not to be endured.

There was a short pause, in which Minna endeavoured more than once, with as much gentleness as possible, to unclasp Brenda's arm from her neck; but whenever she attempted it the slumberer muttered some little pettish sound, like a child disturbed in its sleep, which sufficiently shewed that perseverance in the attempt would awaken her fully.

To her great vexation, therefore, Minna was compelled to remain still and silent; when her lover, as if determined upon gaining her ear by music of another strain, sung the following fragment of a sea-ditty.

“Farewell! Farewell! the voice you hear,  
Has left its last soft tone with you, —



Its next must join the seaward cheer,  
And shout among the shouting crew.

• The accents which I scarce could form  
Beneath your frown's controuling check,  
Must give the word, above the storm,  
To cut the mast, and clear the wreck.

• The timid eye I dared not raise, —  
The hand, that shook when press'd to thine,  
Must point the guns upon the chase, —  
Must bid the deadly cutlass shine.

• To all I love, or hope, or fear, —  
Honour, or own, a long adieu!  
To all that life has soft and dear,  
Farewell! save memory of you!"

He was again silent; and again she, to whom the serenade was addressed, strove in vain to arise without rousing her sister. It was impossible; and she had nothing before her but the unhappy thought that Cleveland was taking leave in his desolation, without a single glance, or a single word. He, too, whose temper was so fiery, yet who subjected his violent mood with such sedulous attention to her will, — could she but have stolen a moment but to say adieu — to caution him against new quarrels with Mer-



toun — to implore him to detach himself from such comrades as he had described, — could she but have done this, who could say what effect such parting admonitions might have had upon his character—nay, upon the future events of his life?

Tantalized by such thoughts, Minna was about to make another and decisive effort, when she heard voices beneath the window, and thought she could distinguish that they were those of Cleveland and Mertoun, speaking in a sharp tone, which, at the same time, seemed cautiously suppressed, as if the speakers feared being overheard. Alarm now mingled with her former desire to rise from bed, and she accomplished at once the purpose which she had so often attempted in vain. Brenda's arm was unloosed from her sister's neck, without the sleeper receiving more alarm than provoked two or three unintelligible murmurs; while, with equal speed and silence, Minna put on some part of her dress, with the intention to steal to the window. But, ere she could accomplish this, the sound of the voices without was exchanged for that of blows and struggling, which terminated suddenly by a deep groan.

Terrified at this last signal of mischief, Minna sprung to the window, and endeavoured to open it, for the persons were so close under the walls of the house that she could not see them, save by putting her head out of the casement. The



iron hasp was stiff and rusted, and, as generally happens, the haste with which she laboured to undo it only rendered the task more difficult. When it was accomplished, and Minna had eagerly thrust her body half out at the casement, those who had created the sounds which alarmed her were become invisible, excepting that she saw a shadow cross the moonlight, the substance of which must have been in the act of turning a corner, which concealed it from her sight. The shadow moved slowly, and seemed that of a man who supported another upon his shoulders; an indication which put the climax to Minna's agony of mind. The window was not above eight feet from the ground, and she hesitated not to throw herself from it hastily, and to pursue the object which had excited her terror.

But when she came to the corner of the buildings from which the shadow seemed to have been projected, she discovered nothing which could point out the way that the figure had gone; and, after a moment's consideration, became sensible that all attempts at pursuit would be alike wild and fruitless. Besides all the projections and recesses of the many-angled mansion, and its numerous offices — besides the various cellars, storehouses, stables, and so forth, which defied her solitary search, there was a range of low rocks, stretching down to the little haven, and which



were, in fact, a continuation of the ridge which formed its pier. These rocks had many indentures, hollows, and caverns, into any one of which the figure to which the shadow belonged might have retired with his fatal burden; for fatal, she feared, it was most likely to prove.

A moment's reflection, as we have said, convinced Minna of the folly of further pursuit; her next thought was to alarm the family; but what tale had she to tell, and of whom was that tale to be told? — On the other hand, the wounded man — if indeed he was wounded — alas, if indeed he were not mortally wounded, — might not be past the reach of assistance; and, with this idea, she was about to raise her voice, when she was interrupted by that of Claud Halcro, who was returning apparently from the haven, and singing, in his manner, a scrap of an old Norse ditty, which might run thus in English: —

“And you shall deal the funeral dole;

Ay, deal it, mother mine,

To weary body, and to heavy soul,

The white bread and the wine.

“And you shall deal my horses of pride;

Ay, deal them, mother mine;

And you shall deal my lands so wide,

And deal my castles nine.



"But deal not vengeance for the deed,  
 And deal not for the crime;  
 The body to its place, and the soul to Heaven's  
 grace,  
 And the rest in God's own time."

The singular adaptation of these rhimes to the situation in which she found herself, seemed to Minna like a warning from heaven. We are speaking of a land of omens and superstitions, and perhaps will scarce be understood by those whose limited imagination cannot conceive how strongly these operate upon the human mind during a certain progress of society. A line of Virgil, turned up casually, was received in the seventeenth century, and in the court of England, as an intimation of future events; and no wonder that a maiden of the distant and wild isles of Zetland should have considered, as an injunction from Heaven, verses which happened to convey a sense analogous to her present situation.

"I will be silent," she muttered, — "I will seal my lips —

The body to its place, and the soul to Heaven's  
 grace,  
 And the rest in God's own time."

"Who speaks there?" said Claud Halcro, in some alarm; for he had not, in his travels in fo-



reign parts, been able by any means to rid himself of his native superstitions. In the condition to which fear and horror had reduced her, Minna was at first unable to reply; and Halcro, fixing his eyes upon the female white figure, which he saw indistinctly, for she stood in the shadow of the house, and the morning was thick and misty, began to conjure her in an ancient rhyme which occurred to him as suited for the occasion, and which had in its gibberish a wild and unearthly sound, which may be lost in the ensuing translation: —

• Saint Magnus, controul thee, that martyr of  
treason;

Saint Ronan, rebuke thee, with rhyme and with  
reason;

By the mass of Saint Martin, the might of Saint  
Mary,

Be thou gone, or thy weird shall be worse if  
thou tarry!

If of good, go hence and hallow thee, —

If of ill, let the earth swallow thee, —

If thou'rt of air, let the grey mist fold thee, —

If of earth, let the swart mine hold thee, —

If a Pixie, seek thy ring, —

If a Nixie, seek thy spring; —

If on middle earth thou'st been

Slave of sorrow, shame, and sin,







“The corpse-lights which danced at the haven,” replied Halcro ; “they bode no good, I promise you — you wot well what the old rhyme says —

Where corpse-light  
Dances bright,  
Be it by day or night,  
Be it by light or dark,  
There shall corpse lie stiff and stark.

I went half as far as the haven to look after them, but they had vanished. I think I saw a boat put off, however, — some one bound for the haaf, I suppose. — I would we had good news of this fishing — there was Norna left us in anger, and then these corpse-lights! — Well, God help the while. I am an old man, and can but wish that all were well over. — But how now, my pretty Minna? tears in your eyes! — And now that I see you in the fair moonlight, barefooted too, by Saint Magnus! — Were there no stockings of Zetland wool soft enough for these pretty feet and ancles, that glance so white in the moon beam? — What, silent! — angry, perhaps” he added, in a more serious tone, “at my nonsense. For shame, silly maiden! — Remember I am old enough to be your father, and have always loved you as my child.”

“I am not angry,” said Minna, constraining



herself to speak — «but heard you nothing? — saw you nothing? — They must have passed you.»

«They!» said Claud Halcro; «what mean you by they? — is it the corpse-lights? — No, they did not pass by me, but I think they have passed by you, and blighted you with their influence, for you are as pale as a spectre. — Come, come, Minna,” he added, opening a side-door of the dwelling, «these moonlight walks are fitter for old poets than for young maidens — And so lightly clad as you are? Maiden, you should take care how you give yourself to the breezes of a Zetland night, for they bring more sleet than odours upon their wings. — But, maiden, go in; for, as glorious John says — or, as he does not say — for I cannot remember how his verse chimes — but, as I say myself, in a pretty poem, written when my muse was in her teens,

Menseful maiden ne'er should rise,  
Till the first beam tinge the skies;  
Silk-fringed eyelids still should close,  
Till the sun has kiss'd the rose;  
Maiden's foot we should not view,  
Mark'd with tiny print on dew,  
Till the opening flowerets spread  
Carpet meet for beauty's tread —

Stay, what comes next? — let me see.”



When the spirit of recitation seized on Claud Halcro, he forgot time and place, and might have kept his companion in the cold air for half an hour, giving poetical reasons why she ought to have been in bed. But she interrupted him by the question, earnestly pronounced, yet in a voice which was scarcely articulate, holding Halcro, at the same time with a trembling and convulsive grasp, as if to support herself from falling, — “Saw you no one in the boat which put to sea but now?”

“Nonsense,” replied Halcro; “how could I see any one, when light and distance only enabled me to know that it was a boat, and not a gram-pus?”

“But there must have been some one in the boat?” repeated Minna, scarce conscious of what she said.

“Certainly,” answered the poet; “boats seldom work to windward of their own accord. But come, this is all folly; and so, as the Queen says, in an old play, which was revived for the stage by rare Will D’Avenant, ‘To bed — to bed — to bed.’”

They separated, and Minna’s limbs conveyed her with difficulty, through several devious passages, to her own chamber, where she stretched herself cautiously beside her still sleeping sister, with a mind harassed with the most agonizing apprehensions. That she had heard Cleveland,



she was positive — the tenor of the songs left her no doubt on that subject. If not equally certain that she had heard young Mertoun's voice in hot quarrel with her lover, the impression to that effect was strong on her mind. The groan, with which the struggle seemed to terminate — the fearful indication from which it seemed that the conqueror had borne off the lifeless body of his victim — all tended to prove that some fatal event had concluded the contest. And which of the unhappy men had fallen? — which had met a bloody death? — which had achieved a fatal and a bloody victory? — These were questions to which the small still voice of interior conviction answered, that her lover Cleveland, from character, temper, and habit, was most likely to have been the survivor of the fray. She received from the reflection an involuntary consolation, which she almost detested herself for admitting, when she recollected that it was at once darkened with her lover's guilt, and embittered with the destruction of Brenda's happiness for ever.

“Innocent, unhappy sister!” such were her reflections; “thou that art ten times better than me, because so unpretending — so unassuming in thine excellence. How is it possible that I should cease to feel a pang, which is only transferred from my bosom to thine?”

As these cruel thoughts crossed her mind, she



could not refrain from straining her sister so close to her bosom, that, after a heavy sigh, Brenda awoke.

“Sister,” she said, “is it you? — I dreamed I lay on one of those monuments which Claud Halcro described to us, where the effigy of the inhabitant beneath lies carved in stone upon the sepulchre. I dreamed such a marble form lay by my side, and that it suddenly acquired enough of life and animation to fold me to its cold, moist bosom — and it is your’s, Minna, that is indeed so chilly. — You are ill, my dearest Minna! for God’s sake, let me rise and call Euphane Fea. — What ails you? has Norna been here again?”

“Call no one hither,” said Minna, detaining her; “nothing ails me for which any one has a remedy — nothing but apprehensions of evil worse than even Norna could prophesy. But God is above all, my dear Brenda; and let us pray to him to turn, as he only can, our evil into good.”

They did jointly repeat their usual prayer for strength and protection from on high, and again composed themselves to sleep, suffering no word save “God bless you,” to pass betwixt them, when their devotions were finished; thus scrupulously dedicating to Heaven their last waking words, if human frailty prevented them from commanding their last waking thoughts. Brenda slept first, and Minna, strongly resisting the



dark and evil presentiments which again began to crowd themselves upon her imagination, was at last so fortunate as to slumber also.

The storm which Halcro had expected began about day-break, — a squall, heavy with wind and rain, such as are often felt, even during the finest part of the season, in these latitudes. At the whistle of the wind, and the clatter of the rain on the shingle-roofing of the fisher-huts, many a poor woman was awakened, and called on her children to hold up their little hands and join in prayer for the safety of the dear husband and father, who was even then at the mercy of the disturbed elements. Around the house of Burgh-Westra, chimneys howled, and windows clashed. The props and rafters of the higher parts of the building, most of them formed out of wreck-wood, groaned and quivered, as if they feared to be again dispersed by the tempest. But the daughters of Magnus Troil continued to sleep as softly and as sweetly as if the hand of Chantry had formed them out of statuary-marble. The squall had passed away, and the sun-beams, dispersing the clouds which drifted to leeward, shone full through the lattice, when Minna first started from the profound sleep into which fatigue and mental exhaustion had lulled her, and raising herself on her arm, began to recal events which, after this interval of profound repose,



seemed almost to resemble the baseless visions of the night. She almost doubted if what she recalled of horror, previous to her starting from her bed, was not, indeed, the fiction of a dream, suggested, perhaps, by some external sounds.

“I will see Claud Halcro instantly,” she said; “he may know something of these strange noises, as he was stirring at the time.”

With that she sprung from bed, but hardly stood upright on the floor, ere her sister exclaimed, “Gracious Heaven! Minna, what ails your foot — your ankle?”

She looked down, and saw with surprise, which amounted to agony, that both her feet, but particularly one of them, was stained with dark crimson, resembling the colour of dried blood.

Without attempting to answer Brenda, she rushed to the window, and cast a desperate look on the grass beneath, for there she knew she must have contracted the fatal stain. But the rain, which had fallen there in treble quantity, as well from the heavens as from the eaves of the house, had washed away that guilty witness, if indeed such had ever existed there. All was fresh and fair, and the blades of grass, overcharged and bent with rain-drops, glittered like diamonds in the bright morning sun.

While Minna stared upon the spangled verdure, with her full dark eyes fixed and enlarged



to circles by the intensity of her terror, Brenda was hanging about her, and, with many an eager inquiry, pressed to know whether or how she had hurt herself?

“A piece of glass cut through my shoe,” said Minna, bethinking herself that some excuse was necessary to her sister; “I scarce felt it at the time.”

“And yet see how it has bled,” said her sister. “Sweet Minna,” she added, approaching her with a wetted towel, “let me wipe the blood off — the hurt may be worse than you think of.”

But as she approached, Minna, who saw no other way of preventing discovery that the blood with which she was stained had never flowed in her own veins, harshly and hastily repelled the proffered kindness. Poor Brenda, unconscious of any offence which she had given to her sister, drew back two or three paces on finding her service thus harshly refused, and stood gazing at Minna with looks in which there was more of surprise and mortified affection than of resentment, but which had yet something also of natural displeasure.

“Sister,” said she, “I thought we had agreed but last night that, happen to us what might, we would at least love each other.”

“Much may happen betwixt night and morning,” answered Minna, in words rather wrench-



ed from her by her situation, than flowing forth the voluntary interpreters of her thoughts.

“Much may indeed have happened in a night so stormy,” answered Brenda; “for see where the very wall around Euphane’s plant-a-cruive has been blown down; but neither wind nor rain, nor aught else, can cool our affection, Minna.”

“But that may chance,” replied Minna, “which may convert it into —”

The rest of the sentence she muttered in a tone so indistinct, that it could not be apprehended; while, at the same time, she washed the blood-stains from her feet and left ankle. Brenda, who still remained looking on at some distance, endeavoured in vain to assume some tone which might re-establish kindness and confidence betwixt them.

“You were right,” she said, “Minna, to suffer no one to help you to dress so simple a scratch — standing where I do it is scarce visible.”

“The most cruel wounds,” replied Minna, “are those which make no outward show — Are you sure you see it at all?”

“O, yes!” replied Brenda, framing her answer as she thought would best please her sister; “I see a very slight scratch; nay, now you draw on the stocking, I can see nothing.”

“You do indeed see nothing,” answered Minna, somewhat wildly; “but the time will soon come that all — ay, all — will be seen and known.”



So saying, she hastily completed her dress, and led the way to the breakfast, where she assumed her place amongst the guests; but which a countenance so pale and haggard, and manners and speech so altered, and so bewildered, that it excited the attention of the whole company, and the utmost anxiety on the part of her father Magnus Troil. Many and various were the conjectures of the guests, concerning a distemperature which seemed rather mental than corporeal. Some hinted the maiden had been struck with an evil eye, and something they muttered about Norna of the Fitful-head; some talked of the departure of Captain Cleveland, and murmured "it was a shame for a young lady to take on so after a land-louper, of whom no one knew any thing;" and this contemptuous epithet was in particular bestowed on the Captain by Mistress Baby Yellowley, while she was in the act of wrapping round her old skinny neck the very handsome overlay (as she called it,) wherewith the said Captain had presented her. The old Lady Glowrowrum had a system of her own, which she hinted to Mistress Yellowley, after thanking God that her own connection with the Burgh-Westra family was by the lass's mother, who was a canny Scotswoman, like herself.

"For, as to these Troils, you see, Dame Yellowley, for as high as they hold their heads, they



say that ken, (winking sagaciously,) that there is a bee in their bonnet; — that Norna, as they call her, for its no her right name neither, is at whiles far beside her right mind, — and they that ken the cause, say the Fowde was some gate or other linked in with it, for he will never hear an ill word of her. But I was in Scotland then, or I might have kend the real cause, as well as other folk. At ony rate there is a kind of wildness in the blood. Ye ken very weel daft folk dinna bide to be contradicted; and I'll say that for the Fowde — he likes to be contradicted as ill as ony man in Zetland. But it shall never be said that I said ony ill of the house that I am sae nearly connected wi'. Only ye will mind, dame, it is through the Sinclairs that we are a-kin, not through the Troils, — and the Sinclairs are kend far and wide for a wise generation, dame. But I see there is the stirrup-cup coming round."

"I wonder," said Mistress Baby to her brother, as soon as the Lady Glowrowrum turned from her, "what gars that muckle wife dame, dame, dame that gate at me. She might ken the blude of the Clinkscals is as gude as ony Glowrowrum amang them."

The guests, meanwhile, were fast taking their departure, scarcely noticed by Magnus, who was so much engrossed with Minna's indisposition, that, contrary to his hospitable wont, he suffered



them to go away unsaluted. And thus concluded, amidst anxiety and illness, the festival of Saint John, as celebrated on that season at the house of Burgh-Westra; adding another caution to that of the Emperor of Ethiopia, — with how little security man can reckon upon the days which he destines to happiness.



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## CHAPTER XXIV.

*But this sad evil which doth her infest,  
Doth course of natural cause far exceed,  
And housed is within her hollow brest,  
That either seems some cursed witch's deed,  
Or evill spright that in her doth such torment  
breed.*

*Fairy Queen, Book III. Canto III.*

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THE term had now elapsed, by several days, when Mordaunt Mertoun, as he had promised at his departure, should have returned to his father's abode at Jarlshof, but there were no tidings of his return. Such delay might, at another time, have excited little curiosity and no anxiety; for old Swertha, who took upon her the office of thinking and conjecturing for the little household, would have concluded that he had remained behind the other guests upon some party of sport or pleasure. But she knew that



Mordaunt had not been lately in favour with Magnus Troil; she knew that he proposed his stay at Burgh-Westra should be a short one, upon account of his father's health, to whom, notwithstanding the little encouragement which his filial piety received, he paid uniform attention. Swertha knew all this, and she became anxious. She watched the looks of her master, the elder Mordaunt; but, wrapt in dark and stern uniformity of composure, his countenance, like the surface of a midnight lake, suffered no one to penetrate into what was beneath. His studies, his solitary meals, his lonely walks, succeeded each other in unvaried rotation, and seemed undisturbed by the least thought about Mordaunt's absence.

At length such reports reached Swertha's ear, from various quarters, that she became totally unable to conceal her anxiety, and resolved, at the risk of provoking her master into fury, or perhaps that of losing her place in his household, to force upon his notice the doubts which afflicted her own mind. Mordaunt's good humour and goodly person must indeed have made no small impression on the withered and selfish heart of the poor old woman, to induce her to take a course so desperate, and from which her friend the Ranzelman endeavoured in vain to deter her. Still, however, conscious that a miscarriage in



the matter would, like the loss of Trinculo's bottle in the horse-pool, be attended not only with dishonour, but with infinite loss, she determined to proceed on her high emprise with as much caution as was consistent with the attempt.

We have already mentioned, that it seemed a part of the very nature of this reserved and unsocial being, at least since his retreat into the utter solitude of Jarlshof, to endure no one to start a subject of conversation, or to put any question to him, that did not arise out of urgent and pressing emergency. Swertha was sensible, therefore, that, in order favourably to open the discourse which she proposed to hold with her master, she must contrive that it should originate with himself.

To accomplish this purpose, while busied in preparing the table for Mr Mertoun's simple and solitary dinner-meal, she formally adorned the table with two covers instead of one, and made all her other little preparations as if he was to have a guest or companion at dinner.

The stratagem succeeded; for Mertoun, on coming from his study, no sooner saw the table thus arranged, than he asked Swertha, who, waiting the effect of her stratagem as a fisher watches his ground-baits, was fiddling up and down the room, "Whether Mordaunt was not returned from Burgh-Westra?"



This question was the cue for Swertha, and she answered, in a voice of sorrowful anxiety, half-real half-affected, "Na, na! — nae sic divot had dunted at their door. It wad be blithe news, indeed, to ken that young Master Mordaunt, poor dear bairn, were safe at hame."

"And, if he be not at home, why should you lay a cover for him, you doting fool?" replied Mertoun, in a tone well calculated to stop the old woman's proceedings. But she replied, boldly, "that, indeed, somebody should take thought about Master Mertoun; a' that she could do was to have seat and plate ready for him when he came. But she thought the dear brain had been ower lang awa'; and, if she maun speak out, she had her ain fears when and whether he might ever come hame."

"Your fears!" said Mertoun, his eyes flashing as they usually did when his hour of un governable passion approached; "do you speak of your idle fears to me, who know that all of your sex, that is not fickleness, and folly, and self-conceit, and self-will, is a bundle of ideotical fears, vapours, and tremors? What are your fears to me, you foolish old hag?"

It is an admirable quality in womankind, that when a breach of the laws of natural affection comes under their observation, the whole sex is in arms. Let a rumour arise in the street of a



parent that had misused a child, or a child that has insulted a parent, — I say nothing of the case of husband and wife, where the interest may be accounted for in sympathy, — and all the women within hearing will take animated and decided part with the sufferer. Swertha, notwithstanding her greed and avarice, had her share of the generous feeling, which does so much honour to her sex, and was, on this occasion, so much carried on by its impulse, that she confronted her master, and upbraided him with his hard-hearted indifference, with a boldness at which she herself was astonished.

“To be sure it wasna her that suld be fearing for her young master, Master Mordaunt, even although he was, as she might well say, the very sea-calf of her heart; but ony other father, but his honor himsel, wad have had speirings made after the poor lad, and him gane this eight days from Burgh-Westra, and naebody kend when or where he had gane. There was nae a bairn in the howff but was maining for him; for he made all their bits of boats with his knife; there wadna be a dry eye in the parish. if aught worse than weal should befall him, — na, no ane, unless it might be his honour’s ain.”

Mertoun had been much struck, and even silenced, by the insolent volubility of his insurgent housekeeper; but, at the last sarcasm, he imposed



on her silence in her turn with an audible voice, accompanied with one of the most terrific glances which his dark eye and stern features could express. But Swertha, who, as she afterwards acquainted the Ranzelman, was wonderfully supported during the whole scene, would not be controuled by the loud voice and ferocious look of her master, but proceeded in the same tone as before.

“His honour,” she said, “had made an unco wark because a wheen bits of kists and duds, that naebody had use for, had been gathered on the beach by the poor bodies of the township; and here was the bravest lad in the country lost, and cast away, as it were, before his een, and nae ane asking what was come o’ him.”

“What should come of him but good, you old fool,” answered Mr Mertoun, “as far, at least, as there can be good in any of the follies he spends his time in?”

This was spoken rather in a scornful than an angry tone, and Swertha, who had got into the spirit of the dialogue, was resolved not to let it drop, now that the fire of her opponent seemed to slacken.

“O ay, to be sure I am an auld fool, — but if Master Mordaunt should have settled down in the Roost, as mair than ae boat had been lost in that wearyfu’ squall the other morning — by good luck it was short as it was sharp, or naething



could have lived in it — or if he were drowned in a loch coming hame on foot, or if he were killed by miss of footing on a craig — the haill island kend how venturesome he was — who,” said Swertha, “will be the auld fool then?” And she added a pathetic ejaculation, that “God would protect the poor motherless bairn! for if he had had a mother, there would have been search made after him before now.”

This last sarcasm affected Mertoun powerfully, — his jaw quivered, his face grew pale, and he muttered to Swertha to go into his study, (where she was scarcely ever permitted to enter), and fetch him a bottle which stood there.

“O ho!” quoth Swertha to herself, as she hastened on the commission, “my master knows where to find a cup of comfort to qualify his water with upon fitting occasions.”

There was indeed a case of such bottles as were usually employed to hold strong waters, but the dust and cobwebs in which they were enveloped shewed that they had not been touched for many years. With some difficulty Swertha extracted the cork of one of them, by the help of a fork — for cork-screw was there none at Jarls-hof — and having ascertained by smell, and, in case of any mistake, by a moderate mouthful, that it contained wholesome Barbadoes-waters, she carried it into the room, where her



master still continued to struggle with his faintness. She then began to pour a small quantity into the nearest cup that she could find, wisely judging that, upon a person so much unaccustomed to the use of spirituous liquors, a little might produce a strong effect. But the patient signed to her impatiently to fill the cup, which might hold more than the third of an English pint measure, up to the very brim, and swallowed it down without hesitation.

“Now the saunts above have a care on us!” said Swertha; “he will be drunk as weel as mad, and wha is to guide him then, I wonder?”

But Mertoun’s breath and colour returned, without the slightest symptom of intoxication; on the contrary, Swertha afterwards reported, that, although she had always a firm opinion in favour of a dram, yet she never saw one work such miracles — he spoke mair like a man of the middle world than she had ever heard him since she had entered his service.

“Swertha,” he said, “you are right in this matter, and I was wrong. — Go down to the Ranzelman directly, tell him to come and speak with me, without an instant’s delay, and bring me special word what boats and people he can command; I will employ them all in the search, and they shall be plentifully rewarded.”

Stimulated by the spur which maketh the old



woman proverbially to trot, Swertha posted down to the hamlet, with all the speed of threescore, rejoicing that her sympathetic feelings were likely to achieve their own reward, having given rise to a quest which promised to be so lucrative, and in the profits whereof she was determined to have her share, shouting out as she went, and long before she got within hearing, the names of Niel Ronaldson, Sweyn Erickson, and the other friends and confederates who were interested in her mission. To say the truth, notwithstanding that the good dame really felt a deep interest in Mordaunt Mertoun, and was mentally troubled on account of his absence, perhaps few things would have disappointed her more than if he had at this moment started up in her path safe and sound, and rendered unnecessary, by his appearance, the expence and the bustle of searching after him.

Soon did Swertha accomplish her business in the village, and adjust with the senators of the township her own little share of per centage upon the profits likely to accrue on her mission; and speedily did she return to Jarlshof, with Niel Ronaldson by her side, schooling him to the best of her skill in all the peculiarities of her master.

“Abune a’ things,” she said, “never make him wait for an answer; and speak loud and dis-



ting, as if you were hailing a boat, — for he douna bide to say the same thing twice over; and if he asks about distance, ye may make leagues for miles, for he kens naething about the face of the earth that he lives upon; and if he speak of silver, ye may ask dollars for shillings, for he minds them nae mair than slate-stanes."

Thus tutored, Niel Ronaldson was introduced into the presence of Mertoun, but was utterly confounded to find that he could not act upon the system of deception which had been projected. — When he attempted, by some exaggeration of distance and peril, to enhance the hire of the boats and of the men, (for the search was to be by sea and land), he found himself at once cut short by Mertoun, who shewed not only the most perfect knowledge of the country, but of distances, tides, currents, and all belonging to the navigation of those seas, although these were topics with which he had hitherto appeared to be totally unacquainted. The Ranzelman, therefore, trembled when they came to speak of the recompence to be afforded for their exertions in the search; for it was not more unlikely that Mertoun should be as well informed of what was just and proper upon this head than upon others; and Niel remembered the storm of his fury when, at an early period after he had settled at Jarlshof, he drove Swertha and Sweyn Erickson from his



presence. As, however, he stood hesitating betwixt the opposite fears of asking too much or too little, Mertoun stopped his mouth, and ended his hesitation, by promising him a recompence beyond what he dared have ventured to ask, with an additional gratuity, in case they returned with the pleasing intelligence that his son was safe.

When this great point was settled, Niel Ronaldson, like a man of conscience, began to consider earnestly the various places at which inquiry should be made after the young man; and having undertaken faithfully that the inquiry should be prosecuted at all the houses of the gentry, both in this and the neighbouring islands, he added, that, “after all, if his honour would not be angry, there was ane not far off, that if any body dared speir her a question, and if she liked to answer it, could tell more about Master Mor-daunt than any body else could. — Ye will ken wha I mean, Swertha? Her that was down at the haven this morning,” Thus he concluded, addressing himself with a mysterious look to the house-keeper, which she answered with a nod and a wink.

“How mean you?” said Mertoun; “speak out, short and open — whom do you speak of?”

“It is Norna of the Fitful-head,” said Swertha, “that the Ranzelman is thinking about: for



she has gone up to Saint Ringan's Kirk this morning on business of her own."

"And what can this person know of my son?" said Mertoun; "she is, I believe, a wandering madwoman, or impostor."

"If she wanders," said Swertha, "it is for nae lack of means at hame. and that is weel known — plenty of a' thing has she of her ain, forbye that the Fowde himsel would let her want naething."

"But what is that to my son?" said Mertoun, impatiently.

"I dinna ken — she took unco pleasure in Master Mordaunt from the time she first saw him, and mony a braw thing she gave him at ae time or another, forbye the gowd chain that hangs about his bonny craig — folks say it is of fairy gold — I ken na what gold it is, but Bryce Snaelsfoot says that the value will mount to an hundred pund English, and that is nae deaf nuts."

"Go, Ronaldson," said Mertoun, "or else send some one, to seek this woman out — if you think there be a chance of her knowing any thing of my son."

"She kens a' thing that happens in thae islands," said Niel Ronaldson, "muckle sooner than other folk, and that is Heaven's truth. — But as to going to the kirk, or the kirk-yard, to spier after her, there is not a man in Zetland



will do it, for meed or for money — and that's Heaven's truth as weel as the other."

"Cowardly superstitious fools!" said Mertoun. — "But give me my cloak, Swertha. — This woman has been at Burgh-Westra — she is related to Troil's family — she may know something of Mordaunt's absence, and its cause — I will seek her myself — She is at the Cross-kirk, you say?"

"No, not at the Cross-kirk, but at the auld Kirk of Saint Ringan's — its a dowie bit, and far frae being canny; and if your honour," added Swertha, "wad walk by my rule, I wad wait until she came back, and no trouble her when she may be mair busied wi' the dead, for ony thing that we ken, than she is wi' the living. The like of her carena to have other folk's een on them when they are, gude sain us! doing their ain particular turns."

Mertoun made no answer, but throwing his cloak loosely around him, (for the day was misty with passing showers,) and leaving the ruinous mansion of Jarlshof, he walked at a pace much faster than was usual with him, taking the direction of the ruinous church, which stood, as he well knew, within three or four miles of his dwelling.

The Ranzelman and Swertha stood gazing after him in silence, until he was fairly out of ear-shot, when, looking seriously on each other, and shaking their sagacious heads in the same



boding dregree of vibration, they uttered their remarks in the same breath.

“Fools are aye fleet and fain,” said Swertha. “Fey\* folks run fast,” added the Ranzelman; “and the thing that we are born to, we cannot win bye. — I have known them that tried to stop folks that were fey. — You have heard of Helen Emberson of Camsey, how she stopped all the boles and windows about the house, that her gude-man might not see day-light, and rise to the haaf-fishing, because she feared foul weather; and how the boat he should have sailed in was lost in the Roost; and how she came back, rejoicing in her good-man’s safety — but ne’er may care, for there she found him drowned in the masking-fat, within the wa’s of his ain biggin; and moreover —”

But here Swertha reminded the Ranzelman that he must go down to the haven to get off the fishing-boats; “for both that my heart is sair for the bonny lad, and that I am fear’d he cast up of his ain accord before you are at sea; and,

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\* *Fey* is an epithet applied to those who are *fated*, which seems to be the derivation of it, or predestined to death, and who are supposed by the Scottish common people to rush upon their doom, as if carried forward by some irresistible impulse.



as I have often told ye, my master may lead, but he winna drive; and if ye do not his bidding, and get out to sea, the never a bodle of boat-hire will ye see."

"Weel, weel, good dame," said the Ranzelman, "we will launch as fast as we can; and by good luck, neither Clawson's boat, nor Peter Grot's; are out to the haaf this morning, for a rabbit ran across them as they were going on board, and they came back like wise men, kenning they wad be called to other wark this day. And a marvel it is to think, Swertha, how few real judicious men are left in this land. — There is our great Udaller is weel eneugh when he is fresh, but he makes ower mony voyages in his ship and his jawl to be lang sae; and now they say his daughter, Mistress Minna, is sair out of sorts. — Then there is Norna kens muckle mair than other folks, but wise woman ye cannot call her. — Our tacksman here, Master Mertoun, his wit is sprung in the bowsprit I doubt — his son is a daft gowk; and I ken few of consequence hereabouts — excepting always myself, and may be you, Swertha — but what may, in some sense or other, be called a fule."

"That may be, Niel Ronaldson," said the dame; "but if you do not hasten the faster to the shore, you will lose tide; and, as I said to my master some short time syne, wha will be the fule then?"

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system of superstition, which spread its roots over all Europe, had not failed to extend them even to this remote archipelago, and Zetland had, in the Catholic times, her saints, her shrines, and her reliques, which, though little known elsewhere, attracted the homage and commanded the observance of the simple inhabitants of Thule. Their devotion to this church of Saint Ninian, or, as he was provincially termed, Saint Ringan, situated, as the edifice was, close to the sea-beach, and serving, in many points, as a landmark to their boats, was particularly obstinate, and was connected with so much superstitious ceremonial and credulity, that the reformed clergy thought it best, by an order of the Church Courts, to prohibit all spiritual service within its walls, as tending to foster the rooted faith of the simple and rude people around in saint-worship, and other erroneous doctrines of the Romish Church.

After the church of Saint Ninian's had been thus denounced as a seat of idolatry, and desecrated of course, the public worship was transferred to another church; and the roof, with its lead and its rafters, having been stripped from the little rude old Gothic building, it was left in the wilderness to the mercy of the elements. The fury of the uncontrouled winds, which howled along an exposed space of shifting sands, (for the



soil resembled that which we have described at Jarlshof,) very soon choked up nave and aisle; and on the north-west side, which was chiefly exposed to the wind, hid the outside walls more than half way upwards with mounds of drifted sand, over which the gable-ends of the building, with the little belfrey, which was built above its nave, arose in ragged and shattered nakedness of ruin.

Yet, deserted as it was, the Kirk of Saint Ringan's still retained some semblance of the ancient homage formerly rendered there. The rude and ignorant fisherman of Dunrossness observed a practice, of which they themselves had well nigh forgot the origin, and from which the Protestant Clergy in vain endeavoured to deter them. — When their boats were in extreme peril, it was common amongst them to propose to vow an *awmous*, as they termed it, that is, an alms, to Saint Ringan; and when the danger was over, they never failed to absolve themselves of their vow, by coming singly and secretly to the old church, and putting off their shoes and stockings at the entrance of the church-yard, walking thrice around the ruins, observing that they did so in the course of the sun. When the circuit was accomplished for the third time, the votary dropped his offering, usually a small silver coin, through the mullions of a lanceolated window, which opened into a side aisle, and then retired, avoid-



ing carefully to look behind him till he was beyond the precincts which had once been hallowed ground; for it was believed that the skeleton of the saint received the offering in his bony hand, and shewed his ghastly death's-head at the window into which it was thrown.

Indeed, the scene was rendered more appalling to weak and ignorant minds, because the same stormy and eddying winds which, on the one side of the church, threatened to bury the ruins with sand, and had, in fact, heaped it up in huge quantities, so as almost to hide the side-wall with its buttresses, seemed bent on uncovering the graves of those who had been laid to their long rest on the south-eastern quarter; and, after an unusually hard gale, the coffins, and sometimes the very corpses, of those who had been interred without the usual cearments, were discovered, in a ghastly manner, to the eyes of the living.

It was to this desolated place of worship that the elder Mertoun now proceeded, though without any of those religious or superstitious purposes with which the church of Saint Ringan's was usually approached. He was totally without the superstitious fears of the country, — nay, from the sequestered and sullen manner in which he lived, withdrawing himself from human society even when assembled for worship, it was currently believed that he erred on the more fatal side, and



believed rather too little than too much of that which the Church receives.

As he entered the little bay, on the shore, and almost on the beach of which the ruins are situated, he could not help pausing for an instant, and becoming sensible that the scene, as calculated to operate on human feelings, had been selected with much judgment as the scite of a religious house. — In front lay the sea, into which two head-lands, which formed the extremities of the bay, projected their gigantic causeways of dark and sable rocks, on the ledges of which the gulls, scouries, and other sea-fowl, appeared like flasks of snow; while, upon the lower ranges of the cliff, stood whole lines of cormorants, drawn up alongside of each other, like soldiers in their battle array, and other living thing was there none to see. The sea, although not in a tempestuous state, was disturbed enough to rush on these capes with a sound like distant thunder, and the billows, which rose in sheets of foam half way up these sable rocks, formed a contrast of colouring equally striking and awful.

Betwixt the extremities, or capes, of these projecting head-lands, there rolled, on the day when Mertoun visited the scene, a deep and dense aggregation of clouds, through which no human eye could penetrate, and which, bounding the vision, and excluding all view of the distant ocean,



rendered it no unapt representation of the sea in the Vision of Mirza, whose extent was concealed by vapours and clouds and storms. The ground rising steeply from the sea-beach, permitted no view into the interior of the country, and seemed a scene of irretrievable barrenness, where scrubby and stunted heath, intermixed with the long bent, or coarse grass, which first covers sandy soils, were the only vegetables that could be seen. Upon a natural elevation, which rose above the beach in the very bottom of the bay, and receded a little from the sea, so as to be without reach of the waves, arose the half-buried ruin which we have already described, surrounded by a wasted, half-ruinous, and mouldering wall, which, breached in several places, served still to divide the precincts of the cemetery. The mariners who were driven by accident into this solitary bay, pretended that the church was occasionally observed to be full of lights, and, from that circumstance, were used to prophecy shipwrecks and deaths by sea.

As Mertoun approached near to the chapel, he adopted, insensibly, and perhaps without much premeditation, measures to avoid being himself seen, until he came close under the walls of the burial-ground, which he approached, as it chanced, on that side where the sand was blow-



ing from the graves, in the manner we have described.

Here, looking through one of the gaps in the wall, which time had made, he beheld the person whom he sought, occupied in a manner which assorted well with the ideas popularly entertained of her character, but which was otherwise sufficiently extraordinary.

She was employed beside a rude monument, on one side of which was represented the rough outline of a cavalier, or knight, on horseback, while on the other appeared a shield, with the armorial bearings so defaced as not to be intelligible; which scutcheon was suspended by one angle, contrary to the modern custom, which usually places them straight and upright. At the foot of this pillar was believed to repose, as Mertoun had formerly heard, the bones of Ribolt Troil, one of the remote ancestors of Magnus, and a man renowned for deeds of valorous enterprise in the fifteenth century. From the grave of this warrior Norna of the Fitful-head seemed busied in shovelling the sand, an easy task where it was so light and loose; so that it seemed plain that she would shortly complete what the rude winds had begun, and make bare the bones which lay there interred. As she laboured she muttered her magic song; for without the Runic rhyme no form of northern superstition was ever per-



formed. We have perhaps preserved too many examples of these incantations; but we cannot help attempting to translate that which follows:—

«Champion, famed for warlike toil,  
Art thou silent, Ribolt Troil?  
Sand, and dust, and pebbly stones,  
Are leaving bare thy giant bones.  
Who dared touch the wild bear's skin  
Ye slumber'd on, while life was in? —  
A woman now, or babe, may come  
And cast the covering from thy tomb.

«Yet be not wrathful, Chief, nor blight  
Mine eyes or ears with sound or sight!  
I come not, with unhallow'd tread,  
To wake the slumbers of the dead,  
Or lay thy giant reliques bare;  
But what I seek thou well can'st spare.  
Be it to my hand allow'd  
To shear a merk's weight from thy shroud;  
Yet leave thee sheeted lead enough  
To shield thy bones from weather rough.

«See, I draw my magic knife —  
Never while thou wert in life  
Laid'st thou still for sloth or fear,  
When point and edge were glittering near;



See, the cearments now I sever —  
 Waken now, or sleep for ever!  
 Thou wilt not wake — the deed is done, —  
 The prize I sought is fairly won.

„Thanks, Ribolt, thanks, — for this the sea  
 Shall smooth its ruffled crest for thee, —  
 And while afar its billows foam,  
 Subside to peace near Ribolt's tomb.  
 Thanks, Ribolt, thanks — for this the might  
 Of wild winds raging at their height,  
 When to thy place of slumber nigh,  
 Shall soften to a lullaby.

„She, the dame of doubt and dread,  
 Norna of the Fitful-head,  
 Mighty in her own despite —  
 Miserable in her might;  
 In despair and frenzy great, —  
 In her greatness desolate;  
 Wisest, wickedest who lives,  
 Well can keep the word she gives.”

While Norna chaunted the first part of this rhyme, she completed the task of laying bare a part of the leaden coffin of the ancient warrior, and severed from it, with much caution and apparent awe, a portion of the metal. She then



reverentially threw back the sand upon the coffin; and by the time she had finished her song, no trace remained that the secrets of the sepulchre had been violated.

Mertoun remained gazing on her from behind the church-yard wall during the whole ceremony, not from any impression of veneration for her or her employment, but because he conceived that to interrupt a madwoman in her act of madness, was not the best way to obtain from her such intelligence as she might have to impart. Meanwhile he had full time to consider her figure, although her face was obscured by her dishevelled hair, and by the hood of her dark mantle, which permitted no more to be visible than a Druidess would probably have exhibited at the celebration of her mystical rites. Mertoun had often heard of Norna before; nay, it is most probable that he might have seen her repeatedly, for she was in the vicinity of Jarlshof more than once since his residence there. But the absurd stories which were in circulation respecting her, prevented his paying any attention to a person whom he regarded as either an impostor, or a madwoman, or a compound of both. Yet, now that his attention was, by circumstances, involuntarily fixed upon her person and deportment, he could not help acknowledging to himself that she was either a complete enthusiast, or rehearsed her part so



admirably, that no Pythoness of ancient times could have excelled her. The dignity and solemnity of her gestures, — the sonorous, yet impressive tone of the voice with which she obtested the departed spirit whose mortal reliques she ventured to disturb, were such as failed not to make an impression upon him, careless and indifferent as he generally appeared to all that went on around him. But no sooner was her singular occupation terminated, than, entering the churchyard with some difficulty, by clambering over the disjointed ruins of the wall, he made Norna aware of his presence. Far from starting, or expressing the least surprise at his appearance in a place so solitary, she said, in a tone that seemed to intimate that he had been expected, “So, — you have sought me at last?”

“And found you,” replied Mertoun, judging he would best introduce the inquiries he had to make, by assuming a tone which corresponded to her own.

“Yes!” she replied, “found me you have, and in the place where all men must meet — amid the tabernacles of the dead.”

“Here we must, indeed, meet at last,” replied Mertoun, glancing his eyes on the desolate scene around, where head-stones, half covered in sand, and others, from which the same wind had stripped the soil on which they rested, covered with



inscriptions, and sculptured with the emblems of mortality, were the most conspicuous objects; —  
 «here, as in the house of death, all men must meet at length; and happy those that come soonest to the quiet haven.”

«He that dares desire this haven,” said Norna, «must have steered a steady course in the voyage of life. I dare not hope for such quiet harbour. Darest thou expect it? or has the course thou hast kept deserved it?”

«It matters not to my present purpose,” replied Mertoun; «I have to ask you what tidings you know of my son Mordaunt Mertoun?”

«A father,” replied the Sybil, «asks of a stranger what tidings she has of his son! How should I know aught of him? the cormorant says not to the mallard, where is my brood?”

«Lay aside this useless affectation of mystery,” said Mertoun; «with the vulgar it has its effect, but upon me it is thrown away. The people of Jarlshof have told me that you do know, or may know, something of Mordaunt Mertoun, who has not returned home after the festival of Saint John’s, held in the house of your relative, Magnus Troil. Give me such information, if indeed you have it to give; and it shall be recompensed, if the means of recompence are in my power.”

«The wide round of earth,” replied Norna, «holds nothing that I would call a recompence



for the slightest word that I throw away upon a living ear. But for thy son, if thou would'st see him in life, repair to the approaching Fair of Kirkwall, in Orkney."

"And wherefore thither?" said Mertoun; "I know he had no purpose in that direction."

"We drive on the stream of fate," answered Norna, "without oar or rudder. You had no purpose this morning of visiting the Kirk of Saint Ringan, yet you are here; — you had no purpose but a minute hence of being at Kirkwall, and yet you will go thither."

"Not, unless the cause is more distinctly explained to me. I am no believer, dame, in those who assert your supernatural powers."

"You shall believe in them ere we part," said Norna. "As yet you know but little of me, nor shall you know more. But I know enough of you, and could convince you with one word that I do so."

"Convince me then," said Mertoun; "for unless I am so convinced, there is little chance of my following your counsel."

"Mark, then," said Norna, "what I have to say on your son's score, else what I shall say to you on your own will banish every other thought from your memory. You shall go to the approaching Fair at Kirkwall; and, on the fifth day of the Fair, you shall walk, at the hour of



noon, in the outer aisle of the Cathedral of Saint Magnus, and there you shall meet a person who will give you tidings of your son."

"You must speak more distinctly, dame," returned Mertoun, scornfully, "if you hope that I should follow your counsel. I have been fooled in my time by women, but never so grossly as you seem willing to gull me."

"Hearken, then!" said the old woman. "The word which I speak shall touch the nearest secret of thy life, and thrill thee through nerve and bone."

So saying, she whispered a word into Mertoun's ear, the effect of which seemed almost magical. He remained fixed and motionless with surprise, as, waving her arm slowly aloft, with an air of superiority and triumph, Norna glided from him, turned round a corner of the ruins, and was soon out of sight.

Mertoun offered not to follow, or to trace her. "We fly from our fate in vain!" he said, as he began to recover himself; and turning, he left behind him the desolate ruins with their cemetery. As he looked back from the very last point at which the church was visible, he saw the figure of Norna, muffled in her mantle, standing on the very summit of the ruined tower, and stretching out in the sea-breeze something which resembled a white pennon, or flag. A feeling of horror,



similar to that excited by her last words, again thrilled through his bosom, and he hastened onwards with unwonted speed, until he had left the church of Saint Ninians, with its bay of sand, far behind him.

Upon his arrival at Jarlshof, the alteration in his countenance was so great, that Swertha conjectured he was about to fall into one of those fits of deep melancholy which she termed his dark hour.

“And what better could be expected,” thought Swertha, “when he must needs go visit Norna of the Fitful-head, when she was in the haunted Kirk of Saint Ninian’s?”

But without testifying any other symptoms of an alienated mind, than that of deep and sullen dejection, her master acquainted her with his intention to go to the Fair of Kirkwall, — a thing so contrary to his usual habits, that the house-keeper well nigh refused to credit her ears. Shortly after he heard, with apparent indifference, the accounts returned by the different persons who had been sent out in quest of Mor-daunt, by sea and land, who all of them returned without any tidings. The equanimity with which Mertoun heard the report of their bad success, convinced Swertha still more firmly, that in his interview with Norna, that issue had been



predicted to him by the Sybil whom he had consulted.

The township were yet more surprised, when their tacksman, Mr Mertoun, as if on some sudden resolution, made preparations to visit Kirkwall during the Fair, although he had hitherto avoided sedulously all such places of public resort. Swertha puzzled herself a good deal without being able to penetrate this mystery; and vexed herself still more concerning the fate of her young master. But her concern was much softened by the deposit of a sum of money, seeming, however moderate in itself, a treasure in her eyes, which her master put into her hands, acquainting her, at the same time, that he had taken his passage for Kirkwall, in a small bark belonging to the proprietor of the island of Mousa.



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## CHAPTER XXVI.

*Nae langer she wept, — her tears were a'  
spent, —*

*Despair it was come, and she thought it con-  
tent ;*

*She thought it content, but her cheek it grew  
pale,*

*And she droop'd, like a lily broke down by the  
hail.*

*Continuation of Auld Robin Gray.*

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THE condition of Minna much resembled that of the village heroine in Lady Ann Lindsay's beautiful ballad. Her natural firmness of mind prevented her from sinking under the pressure of the horrible secret, which haunted her while awake, and was yet more tormenting during her broken and hurried slumbers. There is no grief so dreadful as that which we dare not communicate, and in which we can neither ask nor desire



sympathy; and when to this is added the burthen of a guilty mystery to an innocent bosom, there is little wonder that Minna's health should have sunk under the burthen.

To the friends around, her habits and manners, nay, her temper, seemed altered to such an extraordinary degree, that it is no wonder that some should have ascribed the change to witchcraft, and some to incipient madness. She became unable to bear the solitude in which she formerly delighted to spend her time; yet when she hurried into society, it was without either joining in, or attending to what passed. Generally she appeared wrapped in sad, and even sullen abstraction, until her attention was suddenly roused by some casual mention of the name of Cleveland, or of Mordaunt Mertoun, at which she started, with the horror of one who sees the lighted match applied to a charged mine, and expects to be instantly involved in the horrors of the explosion. And when she observed that the discovery was not yet made, it was so far from being a consolation, that she almost wished the worst was known, rather than endure the continued agonies of suspense.

Her conduct towards her sister was so variable, yet uniformly so painful to the kind-hearted Brenda, that it seemed to all around, one of the strongest features of her malady. Sometimes



Minna was impelled to seek her sister's company, as if by the consciousness that they were common sufferers by a misfortune of which she herself alone could grasp the extent; and then suddenly the feeling of the injury which Brenda had received through the supposed agency of Cleveland, made her unable to bear her presence, and still less to endure the consolation which her sister, mistaking the nature of her malady, vainly endeavoured to administer. Frequently, also, did it happen, that, while Brenda was imploring her sister to take comfort, she incautiously touched upon some subject which thrilled to the very centre of her soul; so that, unable to conceal her agony, Minna rushed hastily from the apartment. All these different moods, though they too much resembled, to one who knew not their real source, the caprices of unkind estrangement, Brenda endured with such prevailing and unruffled gentleness of disposition, that Minna was frequently moved to shed floods of tears upon her neck; and, perhaps, the moments in which she did so, though embittered by the recollection that her fatal secret concerned the destruction of Brenda's happiness as well as her own, were still, softened as they were by sisterly affection, the most endurable moments of this most miserable period of her life.

The effects of the alternations of moping me-



lancholy, fearful agitation, and bursts of nervous feeling, were soon visible on the poor young woman's face and person. She became pale and emaciated; her eye lost the steady quiet look of happiness and innocence, and was alternately dim and wild, as she was acted upon by a general feeling of her own distressful condition, or by some quicker and more poignant sense of agony. Her very features seemed to change, and become sharp and eager, and her voice, which, in its ordinary tones, was low and placid, now sometimes sunk in indistinct mutterings, and sometimes was raised beyond the natural key, in hasty and abrupt exclamations. When in company with others, she was sullenly silent, and when she ventured into solitude, was observed (for it was now thought very proper to watch her on such occasions,) to speak much to herself.

The pharmacy of the islands was in vain resorted to by Minna's anxious father. Sages of both sexes, who knew the virtues of every herb which drinks the dew, and augmented these virtues by words of might, used while they prepared and applied the medicines, were attended with no benefit; and Magnus, in the utmost anxiety, was at last induced to have recourse to the advice of his kinswoman, Norna of the Fitful-head, although, owing to circumstances, noticed in the course of the story, there was at this time



some estrangement between them. His first application was in vain. — Norna was then at her usual place of residence, upon the sea-coast, near the head-land from which she usually took her designation; but, although Erick Scambester himself brought the message, she refused positively to see him, or to return any answer.

Magnus was angry at the slight put upon his messenger and message, but his anxiety on Minna's account, as well as the respect which he had for Norna's real misfortunes and imputed wisdom and power, prevented him from indulging, on the present occasion, his usual irritability of disposition. On the contrary, he determined to make an application to his kinswoman in his own person. He kept his purpose, however, to himself, and only desired his daughters to be in readiness to attend him upon a visit to a relation whom he had not seen for some time, and directed them, at the same time, to carry some provisions along with them, as the journey was distant, and they might perhaps find their friend unprovided.

Unaccustomed to ask explanations of his pleasure, and hoping that exercise and the amusement of such an excursion might be of service to her sister, Brenda, upon whom all household and family charges now devolved, caused the necessary preparations to be made for the expedition;



and, on the next morning, they were engaged in tracing the long and tedious course of beach and of moorland, which, only varied by occasional patches of oats and barley, where a little ground had been selected for cultivation, divided Burgh-Westra from the north-western extremity of the Mainland, (as the principal island is called,) which terminates in the cape called Fitful-head, as the south-western point ends in the cape of Sumburgh.

On they went, through wild and over wold, the Udaller bestriding a strong, square-made, well-barrelled palfrey, of Norwegian breed, somewhat taller, and yet as stout, as the ordinary ponies of the country; while Minna and Brenda, famed, amongst other accomplishments, for their horsemanship, rode two of those hardy animals, which, bred and reared with more pains than is usually bestowed, shewed, both by the neatness of their form and their activity, that the race, so much and so carelessly neglected, is capable of being improved into beauty without losing any thing of its spirit or vigour. They were attended by two servants on horseback, and two on foot, secure that the last circumstance would be no delay to their journey, because a great part of the way was so rugged, or so marshy, that the horses could only move at a foot pace; and that, whenever they met with any consider-



able track of hard and even ground, they had only to borrow from the nearest herd of ponies the use of a couple for the accommodation of these pedestrians.

The journey was a melancholy one, and little conversation passed, except when the Udaller, pressed by impatience and vexation, urged his poney to a quick pace, and again, recollecting Minna's weak state of health, slackened to a walk, and reiterated inquiries how she felt herself, and whether the fatigue was not too much for her. At noon the party halted and partook of some refreshment, for which they had made ample provision, beside a pleasant spring, the pureness of whose waters, however, did not suit the Udaller's palate, until qualified by a liberal addition of right Nantz. After he had a second, yea and a third time, filled a large silver travelling cup, embossed with a German Cupid smoking a pipe, and a German Bacchus emptying his flask down the throat of a bear, he began to become more talkative than vexation had permitted him to be during the early part of their journey, and thus addressed his daughters.

“Well, children, we are within a league or two of Norna's dwelling, and we will soon see how the old spell-mutterer will receive us.

Minna interrupted her father with a faint exclamation, while Brenda, surprised to a great



degree, exclaimed, «Is it then to Norna that we are to make this visit? — Heaven forbid!»

«And wherefore should Heaven forbid?» said the Udaller, knitting his brows; «wherefore, I would gladly know, should Heaven forbid me to visit my kinswoman, whose skill may be of use to your sister, if any woman in Zetland, or man either, can be of service to her? — You are a fool, Brenda, — your sister has more sense. — Cheer up, Minna! — thou wert ever wont to like her songs and stories, and used to hang about her neck, when little Brenda cried and ran from her like a Spanish merchant-man from a Dutch caper.» \*

«I wish she may not frighten me as much to-day, father,” replied Brenda, desirous of indulging Minna in her taciturnity, and at the same time to amuse her father by sustaining the conversation; «I have heard so much of her dwelling, that I am rather alarmed at the thought of going there uninvited.”

«Thou art a fool,” said Magnus, «to think that a visit from her kinsfolks can ever come amiss to a kind, hearty, Hialtland heart, like my cousin Norna’s. — And, now I think on’t, I will

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\* A light-armed vessel of the seventeenth century, adapted for privateering, and much used by the Dutch.



be sworn that is the reason why she would not receive Erick Scambester! — It is many a long day since I have seen her chimney smoke, and I have never carried you thither — She hath indeed some right to call me unkind. But I will tell her the truth — and that is, that, though such be the fashion, I do not think it is fair or honest to eat up the substance of lone women-folks, as we do that of our brother Udallers, when we roll about from house to house in the winter season, until we gather like a snow-ball, and eat up all wherever we come.”

“There is no fear of our putting Norna to any distress just now,” replied Brenda, “for I have ample provision of every thing that we can possibly need — fish, and bacon, and salted mutton, and dried geese — more than we could eat in a week, besides enough of liquor for you, father.”

“Right, right, my girl!” said the Udaller; “a well-found ship makes a merry voyage — so we will only want the kindness of Norna’s roof, and a little bedding for you; for, as to myself, my sea-cloak, and honest dry boards of Norway deal, suit me better than your eider-down cushions and mattresses. So that Norna will have the pleasure of seeing us without having a stiver’s worth of trouble.”



“I wish she may think it a pleasure, sir,” replied Brenda.

“Why, what does the girl mean, in the name of the Martyr?” replied Magnus Troil; “doest thou think my kinswoman is a heathen, who will not rejoice to see her own flesh and blood? — I would I were as sure of a good year’s fishing! — No, no! I only fear we may find her from home at present, for she is often a wanderer, and all with thinking over much on what can never be helped.”

Minna sighed deeply as her father spoke, and the Udaller went on —

“Doest thou sigh at that, my girl? — why, ’tis the fault of half the world — let it never be thine own, Minna.”

Another suppressed sigh intimated that the caution came too late.

“I believe you are afraid of my cousin as well as Brenda is,” said the Udaller, gazing on her pale countenance; “if so, speak the word, and we will return back again as if we had the wind on our quarter, and were running fifteen knots by the line.”

“Do, for Heaven’s sake, sister, let us return!” said Brenda, imploringly; “you know — you remember — you must be well aware that Norna can do nought to help you.”



“It is but too true,” said Minna, in a subdued voice; “but I know not — she may answer a question — a question that only the miserable dare ask at the miserable.”

“Nay, my kinswoman is no miser,” answered the Udaller, who only heard the beginning of the word; “a good income she has, both in Orkney and here, and many a fair lispund of butter is paid to her. But the poor have the best share of it, and shame fall the Zetlander who begrudges them; the rest she spends, I wot not how, in her journies through the islands. But you will laugh to see her house, and Nick Strumpfer, whom she calls Pacolet — many folks think Nick is the devil; but he is flesh and blood, like any of us — his father lived in Graemsay. — I shall be glad to see Nick again.”

While the Udaller thus ran on, Brenda, who, in recompence for a less portion of imagination than her sister, was gifted with sound common sense, was debating with herself the probable effect of this visit on her sister's health. She came finally to the resolution of speaking with her father aside, upon the first occasion which their journey should afford. To him she determined to communicate the whole particulars of their nocturnal interview with worna, to which, among other agitating causes, she attributed the depres-



sion of Minna's spirits, and then make himself the judge whether he ought to persist in his visit to a person so singular, and expose his daughter to all the shock which her nerves might possibly receive from the interview.

Just as she had arrived at this conclusion, her father, dashing the crumbs from his laced waistcoat with one hand, and receiving with the other a fourth cup of brandy and water, drank devoutly to the success of their voyage, and ordered all to be in readiness to set forward. Whilst they were saddling the ponies, Brenda, with some difficulty, contrived to make her father understand she wished to speak with him in private — no small surprise to the honest Udaller, who, though secret as the grave in the very few things where he considered secrecy as of importance, was so far from practising mystery in general, that his most important affairs were often discussed with him by openly in presence of his whole family, servants included.

But far greater was his astonishment, when, remaining purposely with his daughter Brenda, a little in the wake, as he termed it, of the other riders, he heard the whole account of Norna's visit to Burgh-Westra, and of the communication with which she had then astounded his daughters. For a long time he could utter nothing but interjections, and ended with a thousand



curses on his kinswoman's folly in telling his daughters such a history of horror.

"I have often heard," said the Udaller, "that she was quite mad, with all her wisdom, and all her knowledge of the seasons; and, by the bones of my namesake, the Martyr, I begin now to believe it most assuredly. I know no more how to steer than if I had lost my compass. Had I known this before we set out, I think I had remained at home; but now that we have come so far, and that Norna expects us — —"

"Expects us, father!" said Brenda; "how can that be possible?"

"Why, that I know not — but she that can tell how the wind is to blow, can tell which way we are designing to ride. She must not be provoked; — perhaps she has done my family this ill for the words I had with her about that lad Mordaunt Mertoun, and if so, she can undo it again; — and so she shall, or I will know the cause wherefore. — But I will try fair words first."

Finding it thus settled that they were to go forward, Brenda endeavoured next to learn from her father whether Norna's tale was founded in reality. He shook his head, groaned bitterly, and, in a few words, acknowledged the whole, so far as concerned her intrigue with a stranger;



and her father's death, of which she became the accidental and most innocent cause, was a matter of sad and indisputable truth. "For her infant," he said, "he could never, by any means, learn what became of it."

"Her infant!" exclaimed Brenda; "she spoke not a word of her infant!"

"Then I wish my tongue had been blistered," said the Udaller, "when I told you of it. — I see that, young and old, a man has no better chance of keeping a secret from you women, than an eel to keep himself in his hold when he is sniggled with a loop of horse hair — sooner or later the fisher teazes him out of his hole, when he has once the noose round his neck."

"But the infant, my father?" said Brenda, still insisting on the particulars of this extraordinary story, "what became of it?"

"Carried off, I fancy, by the blackguard Vaughan," answered the Udaller, with a gruff accent, which plainly betokened how weary he was of the subject.

"By Vaughan?" said Brenda. "the lover of poor Norna, doubtless! — what sort of man was he, father?"

"Why, much like other men, I fancy," answered the Udaller; "I never saw him in my life. — He kept company with the Scottish families



at Kirkwall; and I with the good old Norse folks — Ah! if Norna had dwelt always amongst her own kin, and not kept company with her Scottish acquaintance, she would have known nothing of Vaughan, and things might have been otherwise — But then I should have known nothing of your blessed mother, Brenda — and that,” he said, his large blue eyes shining with a tear, “would have saved me a short joy and a long sorrow.”

“Norna could but ill have supplied my mother’s place to you, father, as a companion and a friend — that is, judging from all that I have heard,” said Brenda, with some hesitation. But Magnus, softened by recollections of his beloved wife, answered her with more indulgence than she expected.

“I would have been content,” he said, “to have wedded Norna at that time. It would have been the soldering of an old quarrel — the healing of an old sore. All our blood relations wished it, and, situated as I was, especially not having seen your blessed mother, I had little will to oppose their councils. You must not judge of Norna or of me by such an appearance as we now present to you — She was young and beautiful, and I gamesome as a Highland buck, and little caring what haven I made for, having,



as I thought, more than one under my lee. But Norna preferred this man Vaughan, and, as I told you before, it was, perhaps, the best kindness she could have done to me."

"Ah, poor kinswoman!" said Brenda. "But believe you, father, in the high powers which she claims — in the mysterious vision of the dwarf — in the —"

She was interrupted in these questions by Magnus, to whom they were obviously displeasing.

"I believe, Brenda," he said, "according to the belief of my forefathers — I pretend not to be a wiser man than they were in their time, — and they all believed that, in cases of great worldly distress, Providence opened the eyes of the mind, and afforded the sufferers a vision of futurity. It was but a trimming of the boat, with reverence," — here he touched his hat reverentially; "and, after all the shifting of ballast, poor Norna is as heavily loaded in the bows as ever was an Orkney-man's yawl at the dog-fishing — she has more than affliction enough on board to balance whatever gifts she may have had in the midst of her calamity. They are as painful to her, poor soul, as a crown of thorns would be to her brows, though it were the badge of the empire of Denmark. And do not you, Brenda,



seek to be wiser than your fathers. Your sister Minna, before she was so ill, had as much reverence for whatever was produced in Norse, as if it had been in the Pope's bull, which is all written in pure Latin."

"Poor Norna!" repeated Brenda; "and her child — was it never recovered?"

"What do I know of her child," said the Udaller, more gruffly than before, "except that she was very ill, both before and after the birth, though we kept her as merry as we could with pipe and harp, and so forth; — the child had come before its time into this bustling world, so it is likely it has been long dead. — But you know nothing of all these matters, Brenda; so get along for a foolish girl, and ask no more questions about what it does not become you to inquire into."

So saying, the Udaller gave his sturdy little palfrey the spur, and cantering forward over rough and smooth, while the poney's accuracy and firmness of step put all difficulties of the path at secure defiance, he placed himself soon by the side of the melancholy Minna, and permitted her sister to have no farther share in his conversation than as it was addressed to them jointly. She could but comfort herself with the hope, that, as Minna's disease appeared to have



its seat in the imagination, the remedies recommended by Norna might have some chance of being effectual, since, in all probability, they would be addressed to the same faculty.

Their way had hitherto held chiefly over moss and moor, varied occasionally by the necessity of making a circuit around the heads of those long lagoons, called voes, which run up into and indent the country in such a manner, that, though the Mainland of Zetland may be thirty miles, or more, in length, there is, perhaps, no part of it which is more than three miles distant from the salt water. But they had now approached the north-western extremity of the isle, and travelled along the top of an immense ridge of rocks, which had for ages withstood the rage of the Northern Ocean, and of all the winds by which it is buffeted.

At length exclaimed Magnus to his daughters, "There is Norna's dwelling! — Look up, Minna, my love, for if this does not make you laugh, nothing will. — Saw you ever any thing but an osprey that would have made such a nest for herself as that is? — By my namesake's bones, there is not the like of it that living thing ever dwelt in, (having no wings and the use of reason,) unless it chanced to be the Frawa-Stack off Papa, where the King's daughter of Norway was shut up to keep her from her lovers — and



all to little purpose, if the tale be true; \* for, maidens, I would have you to wot that it is hard to keep flax from the lowe." \* \*

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\* *The Fraw-Stack*, or Maiden-Rock, an inaccessible cliff, divided by a narrow gulph from the island of Papa, has on the summit some ruins, concerning which there is a legend similar to that of Danae.

\* \* *Lowe* — flame.

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## CHAPTER XXVII.

*Thrice from the cavern's darksome womb  
Her groaning voice arose;  
And come, my daughter, fearless come,  
And fearless tell thy woes!*

*Meikle.*

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**T**HE dwelling of Norna, though none but a native of Zetland, familiar, during his whole life, with every variety of rock-scenery, could have seen any thing ludicrous in this situation, was not unaptly compared by Magnus Troil to the eyrie of the osprey, or sea-eagle. It was very small, and had been fabricated out of one of those dens which are called Burghs and Picts-houses in Zetland, and Duns on the mainland of Scotland and the Hebrides, and which seem to be the first effort at architecture, — the connecting link betwixt a fox's hole in a cairn of loose stones,



and an attempt to construct a human habitation out of the same materials, without the use of lime or cement of any kind, — without any timber, so far as can be seen from their remains, — without any knowledge of the arch or of the stair. Such as they are, however, the numerous remains of these dwellings, for there is one found on every headland, islet, or point of vantage, which could afford the inhabitants additional means of defence, tend to prove that the remote people by whom these Burghs were constructed, were a numerous race, and that the islands had then a much greater population, than, from other circumstances, we might have been led to anticipate.

The Burgh of which we at present speak had been altered and repaired at a later period, probably by some petty despot, or sea-rover, who, tempted by the security of the situation, which occupied the whole of a projecting point of rock, and was divided from the mainland by a rent or chasm of some depth, had built some additions to it in the rudest style of Gothic defensive architecture; had plaistered the inside with lime and clay, and broke out windows for the admission of light and air; and finally, by roofing it over, and dividing it into stories, by means of beams of wreck-wood, had converted the whole into a tower, resembling a pyramidical dovecot, formed by a double wall, still containing within its thick-



ness that set of circular galleries, or concentric rings, which is proper to all the forts of this primitive construction, and which seem to have constituted the only shelter which they were originally qualified to afford to their shivering inhabitants.

This singular habitation, built out of the loose stones which lay scattered around, and exposed for ages to the vicissitudes of the elements, was as grey, weather-beaten, and wasted, as the rock on which it was founded, and from which it could not easily be distinguished, so completely did it resemble in colour, and so little did it differ in regularity of shape, from a pinnacle or fragment of the cliff.

Minna's habitual indifference to all that of late had passed around her, was for a moment suspended by the sight of an abode, which, at another and happier period of her life, would have attracted at once her curiosity and her wonder. Even now she seemed to feel interest as she gazed upon this singular retreat, and recollected it was that of certain misery and probable insanity, connected, as its inhabitant asserted, and Minna's faith admitted, with power over the elements, and the capacity of intercourse with the invisible world.

“Our kinswoman,” she muttered, “has chosen her dwelling well, with no more of earth than a sea fowl might rest upon, and all around sightless



tempests and raging waves. Despair and magical power could not have a fitter residence."

Brenda, on the other hand, shuddered when she looked on the dwelling to which they were advancing, by a difficult, dangerous, and precarious path, which sometimes, to her great terror, approached the very verge of the precipice; so that, Zetlander as she was, and confident as she had reason to be in the steadiness and sagacity of the sure-footed poney, she could scarce suppress an inclination to giddiness, especially at one point, when, being foremost of the party, and turning a sharp angle of the rock, her feet, as they projected from the side of the poney, hung for an instant sheer over the ledge of the precipice, so that there was nothing save empty space betwixt the sole of her shoe and the white foam of the vexed ocean, which dashed, howled, and foamed, five hundred feet below. What would have driven a maiden of another country into delirium, gave her but a momentary uneasiness, which was instantly lost in the hope that the impression which the scene appeared to make on her sister's imagination might be favourable to her cure.

She could not help looking back to see how Minna should pass the point of peril, which she herself had just rounded; and could hear the strong voice of the Udaller, though to him such rough paths were familiar as the smooth sea-



beach, call, in a tone of some anxiety, "Take heed, Jarto,"\* as Minna, with an eager look, dropped her bridle, and stretched forward her arms, and even her body, over the precipice, in the attitude of the wild swan, when, balancing itself, and spreading its broad pinions, it prepares to launch from the cliff upon the bosom of the winds. Brenda felt, at that instant, a pang of unutterable terror, which left a strong impression on her nerves, even when relieved, as it instantly was, by her sister recovering herself and sitting upright on her saddle, the opportunity and temptation, (if she felt it,) passing away, as the quiet steady animal which supported her rounded the projecting angle, and turned its patient and firm foot from the verge of the precipice.

They now attained a more level and open space of ground, being the flat top of an isthmus of projecting rock, narrowing again towards a point, where it was terminated by the chasm which separated the small peak, or *stack*, occupied by Norna's habitation, from the main ridge of cliff and precipice. This natural fosse, which seemed to have been the work of some convulsion of nature, was deep, dark, and irregular, narrower

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\* *Jarto*, — My dear.



towards the bottom, which could not be distinctly seen, and widest at top, having the appearance as if that part of the cliff occupied by the building had been half rent away from the isthmus which it terminated, — an idea favoured by the angle at which it seemed to recede from the land, and slope sea-ward, with the building which crowned it.

This angle of projection was so considerable, that it required recollection to dispel the idea that the rock, so much removed from the perpendicular, was about to precipitate itself seaward, with its old tower; and many a timorous person would have been afraid to put foot upon it, lest an addition of weight, so inconsiderable as that of the human body, should hasten a catastrophe which seemed at every instant impending.

Without troubling himself about such fantasies, the Udaller rode towards the tower, and there dismounting along with his daughters, gave the ponies in charge to one of their domestics, with directions to disencumber them of their burthens, and turn them out for rest and refreshment upon the nearest heath. This done, they approached the gate, which seemed formerly to have connected with the land by a rude draw-bridge, some of the apparatus of which was still



visible. But the rest had been long demolished, and was replaced by a stationary foot-bridge, formed of barrel-staves covered with turf, very narrow and ledgeless, and supported by a sort of arch, constructed out of the jaw-bones of the whale. Along this "brigg of dread" the Udaller stepped with his usual portly majesty of stride, which threatened its demolition and his own at the same time; his daughters trode more lightly and more safely after him, and the party stood before the low and rugged portal of Norna's habitation.

"If she should be abroad after all," said Magnus, as he plied the black oaken door with repeated blows; "but if so we will at least lie by a day for her return, and make Nick Strumpfer pay the demurrage in bland and brandy."

As he spoke the door opened, and displayed, to the alarm of Brenda, and the surprise of Minna herself, a square made dwarf, about four feet five inches high, with a head of most portentous size, and features correspondent—namely, a huge mouth, a tremendous nose, with large black nostrils, which seemed to have slit upwards, blubbery lips of an unconscionable size, and huge wall eyes, with which he leered, sneered, grinned, and goggled on the Udaller as an old acquaintance, without uttering a single word. The young women



could hardly persuade themselves that they did not see before their eyes the very demon Troll, who made such a distinguished figure in Norna's legend. Their father went on addressing this uncouth apparition in terms of such condescending friendship as the better sort apply to their inferiors, when they wish, for any immediate purpose, to conciliate or coax them, — a tone, by the by, which generally contains, in its very familiarity, as much offence as the more direct assumption of distance and superiority.

“Ha, Nick! honest Nick!” said the Udaller, “here you are, lively and lovely as Saint Nicholas your namesake, when he is carved with an axe for the head-piece of a Dutch dogger. How doest thou do, Nick, or Pacolet, if you like that better? Nicholas, here are my two daughters, nearly as handsome as thyself thou seest.”

Nick grinned, and did a clumsy obeisance by way of courtesy, but kept his broad mis-shapen person firmly placed in the door-way.

“Daughters,” continued the Udaller, who seemed to have his reasons for speaking this Cerberus fair, at least according to his own notions of propitiation, — “this is Nick Strumpfer, maidens, whom his mistress calls Pacolet, being a light-limbed dwarf, as you see, like he that wont



to fly about, like a *Scourie*, on his wooden hobby-horse, in the old story-book of Valentine and Orson, that you, Minna, used to read whilst you were a child. I assure you he can keep his mistress's counsel, and never told one of her secrets in his life — ha, ha, ha!”

The ugly dwarf grinned ten times wider than before, and shewed the meaning of the Udaller's jest, by opening his immense jaws, and throwing back his head, so as to discover, that, in the immense cavity of his mouth, there only remained the small shrivelled remnant of a tongue, capable perhaps of assisting him in swallowing his food, but unequal to the formation of articulate sounds. Whether this organ had been curtailed by cruelty, or injured by disease, it was impossible to guess; but that the unfortunate being had not been originally dumb, was evident from his retaining the sense of hearing. Having made this horrible exhibition, he repaid the Udaller's mirth with a loud, horrid, and discordant laugh, which had something in it the more hideous that his mirth seemed to be excited by his own misery. The sisters looked on each other in silence and fear, and even the Udaller seemed disconcerted.

“And how now?” he proceeded, after a minute's pause. “When did'st thou wash that throat of thine, that is about the width of the



Pentland Frith, with a cup of brandy? Ha, Nick! I have that with me which is sound stuff, boy, ha!"

The dwarf bent his beetle-brows, shook his mis-shapen head, and made a quick sharp indication, throwing his right hand up to his shoulder with the thumb pointed backwards.

"What! my kinswoman," said the Udaller, comprehending the signal, "be angry? Well, shalt have a flask to carouse when she is from home, old acquaintance; — lips and throats may swallow though they cannot speak."

Pacolet grinned a grim assent.

"And now," said the Udaller, "stand out of the way, Pacolet, and let me carry my daughters to see their kinswoman. By the bones of Saint Magnus, it shall be a good turn in thy way. — Nay, never shake thy head, man; for if thy mistress be at home, see her we will."

The dwarf again intimated the impossibility of their being admitted, partly by signs, partly by mumbling some uncouth and most disagreeable sounds, and the Udaller's mood began to arise.

"Tittle tattle, man," said he; "trouble not me with thy gibberish, but stand out of the way,



and the blame, if there be any, shall rest with me."

So saying, Magnus Troil laid his sturdy hand upon the collar of the rocusant dwarf's jacket of blue wadmaal, and, with a strong but not a violent grasp, removed him from the door-way, pushed him gently aside, and entered, followed by his two daughters, whom a sense of apprehension, arising out of all which they saw and heard, kept very close to him. A crooked and dusky passage, through which Magnus led the way, was dimly enlightened by a shot-hole, communicating with the interior of the building, and originally intended doubtless to command the entrance by a hagbut or culverin. As they approached nearer, for they walked slowly and with hesitation, the light imperfect as it was, was suddenly obscured; and, on looking upward to discern the cause, Brenda was startled to observe the pale and obscurely-seen countenance of Norna gazing downwards upon them, without speaking a word. There was nothing extraordinary in this, as the mistress of the mansion might be naturally enough looking out to see what guests were thus suddenly and unceremoniously intruding themselves on her presence. Still, however, the natural paleness of her features, exaggerated by the light in which they were at present exhibited, —



the immoveable sternness of her look, which shewed neither kindness nor courtesy of civil reception, — her dead silence, and the singular appearance of every thing about her dwelling, augmented the dismay which Brenda had already conceived. Magnus Troil and Minna had walked slowly forward, without observing the apparition of their singular hostess.

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## CHAPTER XXVIII.

*The witch then raised her wither'd arm,  
And waved her wand on high,  
And, while she spoke the mutter'd charm,  
Dark lightning fill'd her eye.*

*Meikle.*

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“THIS should be the stair,” said the Udaller, blundering in the dark against some steps of irregular ascent — “This should be the stair, unless my memory greatly fail me; ay, and there she sits,” he added, pausing at a half-open door, “with all her tackle about her as usual, and as busy, doubtless, as the devil in a gale of wind.”

As he made this irreverent comparison, he entered, followed by his daughters, the darkened apartment in which Norna was seated, amidst a confused collection of books of various languages, parchment scrolls, tablets and stones in-



scribed with the straight and angular characters of the Runic alphabet, and similar articles which the vulgar connected with the exercise of the forbidden arts. There were also lying in the chamber, or hung over the rude and ill-contrived chimney, an old shirt of mail, with the head-piece, battle-axe, and lance, which had once belonged to it; and on a shelf were disposed, in great order, several of those curious stone-axes, formed of green granite, which are often found in these islands, where they are called thunderbolts by the common people, who usually preserve them as a charm of security against the effects of lightning; also a stone sacrificial knife, used perhaps for immolating human victims, and one or two of the brazen implements called Celts, the purpose of which has troubled the repose of so many antiquaries. A variety of other articles, some of which had neither name nor were capable of description, lay in confusion about the apartment; and in one corner, on a quantity of withered seaweed, reposed what seemed, at first view, to be a large unshapely dog, but, when seen more closely, proved to be a tame seal, which it had been Norna's amusement to domesticate.

This uncouth favourite bristled up in its corner, upon the arrival of so many strangers, with an alertness similar to that which a terrestrial dog would have displayed on a similar occasion; but



Norna remained motionless, seated behind a table of rough granite, propped up by mis-shapen feet of the same material, which, besides the old book with which she seemed to be busied, sustained a cake of the coarse unleavened bread used by the poor peasants of Norway, together with a jar of water.

Magnus Troil remained a minute in silence gazing upon his kinswoman, while the singularity of her mansion inspired Brenda with much fear, and changed, though but for a moment, the melancholy and abstracted mood of Minna, into a feeling of interest not unmixed with awe. The silence was interrupted by the Udaller, who, unwilling on the one hand to give his kinswoman offence, and desirous on the other to shew that he was not daunted by a reception so singular, opened the conversation thus: —

“I give you good e’en, cousin Norna — my daughters and I have come far to see you.”

Norna raised her eyes from her volume, looked full at her visitors, then let them quietly sink down on the leaf with which she seemed to be engaged.

“Nay, cousin,” said Magnus, “take your own time — our business with you can wait your leisure. — See here, Minna, what a fair prospect here is of the cape, scarce a quarter of a mile off; you



may see the billows breaking on it topmast high. Our kinswoman has got a pretty seal too — Here, sealchie, my man, whew, whew!”

The seal took no further notice of the Udaller's advances to acquaintance, than by uttering a low growl.

“He is not so well trained,” continued the Udaller, affecting an air of ease and unconcern, “as Peter MacRaw's, the old piper of Stornoway, who had a seal that flapped its tail to the tune of *Caberfae*, and acknowledged no other whatsoever. Well, cousin,” he concluded, observing that Norna closed her book, “are you going to give us a welcome at last, or must we go farther than our blood-relation's house to seek one, and that when the evening is wearing late apace?”

“Ye dull and hard-hearted generation, as deaf as the adder to the voice of the charmer,” answered Norna, addressing them, “why come ye to me? — You have slighted every warning I could give of the coming harm, and now that it hath come upon you, ye seek my counsel when it can avail you nothing.”

“Look you, kinswoman,” said the Udaller, with his usual frankness, and boldness of manner and accent, “I must needs tell you that your courtesy is something of the coarsest and the coldest. I cannot say that I ever saw an adder,



in regard there are none in these parts; but touching my own thoughts of what such a thing may be, it cannot be termed suitable comparison to me or to my daughters, and that I would have you to know, For old acquaintance, and certain other reasons, I do not leave your house upon the instant; but as I came hither in all kindness and civility, so I pray you to receive me with the like, otherwise we will depart, and leave shame on your inhospitable threshold."

"How!" said Norna, "dare you use such bold language in the house of one from whom all men, from whom you yourself, come to solicit counsel and aid? They who speak to the Reimkennar, must lower their voice to her before whom winds and waves hush both blast and billow."

"Blast and billow may hush themselves if they will," replied the peremptory Udaller, "but that will not I. I speak in the house of my friend as in my own, and strike sail to none."

"And hope ye by this rudeness to compel me to answer to your interrogatories?" replied Norna.

"Kinswoman, replied Magnus Troil, "I know not so much as you of the old Norse sagas, but this I know, that when kempies were wont, long since, to seek the habitations of the gall-dragons and spae-women, they came with their axes on



their shoulders, and their good swords drawn in their hands, and compelled the power whom they invoked to listen to and to answer them, ay were it Odin himself."

"Kinsman," replied Norna, arising from her seat and coming forward, "thou hast spoken well and in good time for thyself and thy daughters; for hadst thou turned from my threshold without extorting an answer, morning's sun had never again shone upon you. The spirits who serve me are jealous, and will not be employed in aught that may benefit humanity, unless their service is commanded by the undaunted importunity of the brave and the free. And now speak, what wouldst thou have of me?"

"My daughter's health," replied Magnus, "which no remedies have been able to restore."

"Thy daughter's health," answered Norna; "and what is the maiden's ailment?"

"The physician," said Troil, "must name the disease. All that I can tell thee of it is —"

"Be silent," said Norna, interrupting him, "I know all thou canst tell me, and more than thou thyself knowest. Sit down all of you — and thou, maiden," she said, addressing Minna, "sit thou in that chair," pointing to the place she had just left, "once the seat of Giervada, at whose voice



the stars hid their beams, and the moon herself grew pale."

Minna moved with slow and tremulous step towards the rude seat which was thus indicated to her, which was composed of stone, formed into the shape of a chair by the rough and unskilful hand of some ancient Gothic artist.

Brenda, creeping as close as possible to her father, seated herself along with him upon a bench at some distance from Minna, and kept her eyes, with a mixture of fear, pity, and anxiety, closely fixed upon her. It would be difficult altogether to decypher the emotions by which this amiable and affectionate girl was agitated at the moment. Deficient in her sister's predominating quality of high imagination, and little credulous, of course, to the marvellous, she could not but entertain some vague and indefinite fears on her own account, concerning the nature of the scene which was soon to take place. But these were in a manner swallowed up in her apprehensions on the score of her sister, who, with a frame so much weakened, spirits so much exhausted, and a mind so susceptible of the impressions which all around her was calculated to excite, now sat pensively resigned to the agency of one, whose treatment might produce the most baneful effects upon such a subject.



Brenda gazed at Minna, who sat in that rude chair of dark stone, her finely formed shape and limbs making the strongest contrast with its ponderous and irregular angles, her cheek and lips as pale as clay, and her eyes turned upward, and lighted with the mixture of resignation and excited enthusiasm, which belonged to her disease and her character. The younger sister then looked on Norna, who muttered to herself in a low monotonous manner, as, gliding from one place to another, she collected different articles, which she placed one by one on the table. And lastly, Brenda looked anxiously to her father, to gather, if possible, from his countenance, whether he entertained any part of her own fears for the consequences of the scene which was to ensue, considering the state of Minna's health and spirit. But Magnus Troil seemed to have no such apprehensions, but viewed with stern composure Norna's preparations; and appeared to wait the event with the composure of one, who, confiding in the skill of a medical artist, sees him preparing to enter upon some important and painful operation, in the issue of which he is interested by friendship or by affection.

Norna, meanwhile, went onward with her preparations, until she had placed on the stone table a variety of miscellaneous articles, and among the rest, a small chafing dish full of charcoal, a



crucible, and a piece of thin sheet-lead. She then spoke aloud — “It is well that I was aware of your coming hither — ay, long before you yourself had resolved it — how should I else have been prepared for that which is now to be done? — Maiden,” she continued, addressing Minna, “where lies thy pain?”

The patient answered, by pressing her hand to the left side of her bosom.

“Even so,” replied Norna, “even so — ’tis the site of weal or woe. And you, her father and her sister, think not this the idle speech of one who talks by guess — if I can tell the ill, it may be that I shall be able to render that less severe, which may not, by any aid, be wholly amended. — The heart — ay, the heart — touch that, and the eye grows dim, the pulse fails, the wholesome stream of our blood is choked and troubled, our limbs decay like sapless sea-weed in a summer’s sun; our better views of existence are passed and gone; what remains is the dream of lost happiness, or the fear of inevitable evil. But the Reimkennar must to her work — well it is that I have prepared the means.”

She threw off her long dark-coloured mantle, and stood before them in her short jacket of light-blue wadmaal, with its skirt of the same stuff, fancifully embroidered with black velvet, and



bound at the waist with a chain or girdle of silver, formed into singular devices. Norna next undid the fillet which bound her grizzled hair, and shaking her head wildly, caused it to fall in dishevelled abundance over her face and around her shoulders, so as almost entirely to hide her features. She then placed a small crucible on the chafing dish already mentioned, — dropped a few drops from a vial on the charcoal below, — pointed towards it her wrinkled fore-finger, which she had previously moistened with liquid from another small bottle, and said with a deep voice, “Fire, do thy duty;” — and the words were no sooner spoken, than, probably by some chemical combination of which the spectators were not aware, the charcoal which was under the crucible became slowly ignited; while Norna, as if impatient of the delay, threw hastily back her disordered tresses, and, while her features reflected back the sparkles and red light of the fire, and her eyes flashed from amongst her hair like those of a wild animal from its cover, blew fiercely till the whole was in an intense glow. She paused a moment from her toil, and muttering that the elemental spirit must be thanked, recited in her usual monotonous, yet wild mode of chaunting, the following verses —



«Thou so needful, yet so dread,  
 With cloudy crest, and wing of red;  
 Thou, without whose genial breath  
 The North would sleep the sleep of death;  
 Who deign'st to warm the cottage hearth,  
 Yet hurls proud palaces to earth, —  
 Brightest, keenest of the Powers,  
 Which form and rule this world of ours,  
 With my rhyme of Runic, I  
 Thank thee for thy agency.”

She then severed a portion from the small  
 mass of sheet-lead which lay upon the table, and,  
 placing it in the crucible, subjected it to the  
 action of the lighted charcoal, and, as it melted,  
 she sung —

«Old Reimkennar, to thy art  
 Mother Hertha sends her part;  
 She, whose gracious bounty gives  
 Needful food for all that lives.  
 From the deep mine of the North,  
 Came the mystic metal forth,  
 Doom'd, amidst disjointed stones,  
 Long to cear a champion's bones,  
 Disinhumed my charms to aid —  
 Mother Earth, my thanks are paid.”



She then poured out some water from the jar into a large cup, or goblet, and sung once more, as she slowly stirred it round with the end of her staff —

„Girdle of our islands dear,  
Element of Water, hear!  
Thou whose power can overwhelm  
Broken mounds and ruined realm  
On the lowly Belgian strand;  
All thy fiercest rage can never  
Of our soil a furlong sever  
From our rock-defended land;  
Play then gently thou thy part,  
To assist old Norna's art.“

She then, with a pair of pincers, removed the crucible from the chafing dish, and poured the lead, now entirely melted, into the bowl of water, repeating at the same time —

„Elements, each other greeting,  
Gifts and power attend your meeting!“

The melted lead, spattering as it fell into the water, formed, of course, the usual combination of irregular forms which is familiar to all who in



childhood have made the experiment, and from which, according to our childish fancy, we may have selected portions bearing some resemblance to domestic articles — the tools of mechanics, or the like. Norna seemed to busy herself in some such researches, for she examined the mass of lead with scrupulous attention, and detached it into different portions, without apparently being able to find a fragment in the form which she desired.

At length she again muttered, rather as speaking to herself than to her guests, "He, the Viewless, will not be omitted, — he will have his tribute even in the work to which he gives nothing. — Stern compeller of the clouds, thou also shalt hear the voice of the Reimkennar."

Thus speaking, Norna once more threw the lead into the crucible, where, hissing and spattering as the wet metal touched the sides of the red-hot vessel, it was soon again reduced into a state of fusion. The Sybil meantime turned to a corner of the apartment, and opening suddenly a window which looked to the north-west, let in the fitful radiance of the sun, now lying almost level upon a great mass of red clouds, which, boding future tempest, occupied the edge of the horizon, and seemed to brood over the billows of the boundless sea. Turning to this quarter, from which a



low hollow moaning breeze then blew, Norna addressed the spirit of the winds, in tones which seemed to resemble his own:

“Thou, that over billows dark  
Safely send’st the fisher’s bark, —  
Giving him a path and motion  
Through the wilderness of ocean;  
Thou, that when the billows brave ye,  
O’er the shelves can’st drive the navy, —  
Did’st thou chafe as one neglected,  
While thy brethren were respected?  
To appease thee, see, I tear  
This full grasp of grizzled hair;  
Oft thy breath hath through it sung,  
Softening to my magic tongue, —  
Now ’tis thine to bid it fly  
Through the wide expanse of sky,  
’Mid the countless swarms to sail  
Of wild-fowl wheeling on thy gale;  
Take thy portion and rejoice, —  
Spirit, thou hast heard my voice!” —

Norna accompanied these words with the action which they described, tearing a lock of hair with vehemence from her head, and strewing it upon the wind as she continued her recitation. She then shut the casement, and again involved the



chamber in the dubious twilight, which best suited her character and occupation. The melted lead was once more emptied into the water, and the various whimsical conformations which it received from the operation were examined with great care by the Sybil, who at length seemed to intimate, by voice and gesture, that her spell had been successful. She selected from the fused metal a piece about the size of a small nut, bearing in shape a close resemblance to that of the human heart, and approaching Minna, again spoke in song:—

“She who sits by haunted well,  
Is subject to the Nixies spell;  
She who walks on lonely beach,  
To the Mermaid’s charmed speech;  
She who walks round ring of green,  
Offends the peevish Fairy Queen;  
And she who takes rest in the Dwarfie’s cave,  
A weary weird of woe shall have.

“By ring, by spring, by cave, by shore,  
Minna Troil has braved all this and more;  
And yet hath the root of her sorrow and ill  
A source that’s more deep and more mystical  
still.” —



Minna, whose attention had been latterly something disturbed by reflections on her own secret sorrow, now suddenly recalled it, and looked eagerly on Norna as if she expected to learn from her rhimes something of deep interest. The northern Sybil, meanwhile, proceeded to pierce the piece of lead, which bore the form of a heart, and to fix in it a piece of gold wire, by which it might be attached to a chain or neck-lace. She then proceeded in her rhime.

„Thou art within a demon's hold,  
More wise than Heims, more strong than  
Trolld;  
No syren sings so sweet as he, —  
No fay springs lighter on the lea;  
No elfin power hath half the art  
To sooth, to move, to wring the heart, —  
Life-blood from the cheek to drain,  
Drench the eye, and dry the vein.  
Maiden, ere we farther go,  
Doest thou note me, aye or no?”

Minna replied in the same rythmical manner, which, in jest and earnest, was frequently used by the ancient Scandinavians: —



“I mark thee, my mother, both word, look, and  
sign ;

Speak on with thy riddle — to read it be mine.”

“Now, Heaven and every saint be praised!”  
said Magnus; “they are the first words to the  
purpose, which she hath spoken these many  
days.”

“And they are the last which she shall speak  
for many a month,” said Norna, incensed at the  
interruption, “if you again break the progress  
of my spell. Turn your faces to the wall, and  
look not hitherward again, under penalty of  
my severe displeasure. You, Magnus Troil,  
from hard-hearted audacity of spirit, and you,  
Brenda, from wanton and idle disbelief in that  
which is beyond your bounded comprehension,  
are unworthy to look on this mystic work; and  
the glance of your eyes mingles with, and weak-  
ens the spell; for the powers cannot brook dis-  
trust.”

Unaccustomed to be addressed in a tone so  
peremptory, Magnus would have made some  
angry reply; but reflecting that the health of  
Minna was at stake, and considering that she  
who spoke was a woman of many sorrows, he  
suppressed his anger, bowed his head, shrugged  
his shoulders, assumed the prescribed posture,



averting his head from the table, and turning towards the wall. Brenda did the same, on receiving a sign from her father, and both remained profoundly silent.

Norna then addressed Minna once more: —

“Mark me! for the word I speak  
Shall bring the colour to thy cheek.  
This leaden heart, so light of cost,  
The symbol of a treasure lost,  
Thou shalt wear in hope and in peace,  
That the cause of your sickness and sorrow  
may cease,  
When crimson foot meets crimson hand  
In the Martyrs’ Aisle, and in Orkney-land.”—

Minna coloured deeply at the last couplet, intimating, as she failed not to interpret it, that Norna was completely acquainted with the secret cause of her sorrow. The same conviction led the maiden to hope in the favourable issue, which the Sybil seemed to prophecy; and not venturing to express her feelings in any manner more intelligible, she pressed Norna's withered hand with all the warmth of affection, first to her breast and then to her bosom, bedewing it at the same time with her tears.



With more of human feeling than she usually exhibited, Norna extricated her hand from the grasp of the poor girl, whose tears now flowed freely, and then, with more tenderness of manner than she had yet shewn, she knotted the leaden heart to a chain of gold, and hung it around Minna's neck, singing as she performed that last branch of the spell, —

“Be patient, be patient, for Patience hath  
power

To ward us in danger, like mantle in shower;  
A fairy gift you best may hold

In a chain of fairy gold; —

The chain and the gift are each a true token,  
That not without warrant old Norna has  
spoken;

But thy nearest and dearest must never be-  
hold them,

Till time shall accomplish the truths I have  
told them.”

The verses being concluded, Norna carefully arranged the chain around her patient's neck so as to hide it in her bosom, and thus ended the spell, — a spell which, at the moment I record these incidents, it is known has been lately practised in Zetland, where any decline of health,



without apparent cause, is imputed by the lower orders to a demon having stolen the heart from the body of the patient, and where the experiment of supplying the deprivation by a leaden one, prepared in the manner described, has been resorted to within these few years. In a metaphorical sense, the disease may be considered as a general one in all parts of the world; but, as this simple and original remedy is peculiar to the isles of Thule, it were unpardonable not to preserve it at length, in a narrative connected with Scottish antiquities.

A second time Norna reminded her patient, that if she shewed, or spoke of, the fairy gifts, their virtue would be lost — a belief so common as to be received into the superstitions of all nations. Lastly, unbuttoning the collar which she had just fastened, she shewed her a link of the gold chain, which Minna instantly recognized as that formerly given by Norna to Mordaunt Mertoun. This seemed to intimate he was yet alive, and under Norna's protection; and she gazed on her with the most eager curiosity. But the Sybil imposed her finger on her lips in token of silence, and a second time involved the chain in those folds which modestly and closely veiled one of the most beautiful, as well as one of the kindest bosoms in the world.



Norna then extinguished the lighted charcoal, and, as the water hissed upon the glowing embers, commanded Magnus and Brenda to look around, and behold her task accomplished.







and asked his forgiveness for the trouble she had of late occasioned to him. It is unnecessary to add, that this was at once granted, with a full, though rough burst of parental tenderness, and as many close embraces as if his child had been just rescued from the jaws of death. When Magnus had dismissed Minna from his arms, to throw herself into those of her sister, and express to her, rather by kisses and tears than in words, the regret she entertained for her late wayward conduct, the Udaller thought proper, in the meantime, to pay his thanks to their hostess, whose skill had proved so efficacious. But scarce had he come out with, "Much respected kinswoman, I am but a plain old Norse-man," — when she interrupted him, by pressing her finger on her lips.

"There are those around us," she said, "who must hear no mortal voice, witness no sacrifice to mortal feelings—there are times when they mutiny even against me, their sovereign mistress, because I am still shrouded in the flesh of humanity. Fear, therefore, and be silent. I, whose deeds have raised me from the low-sheltered valley of life, where dwell its social wants and common charities; — I, who have bereft the Giver of the Gift which he gave, and stand alone on a cliff of immeasurable height, detached from earth, save from the small



portion that supports my miserable tread—I alone am fit to cope with these sullen mates. Fear not, therefore, but yet be not too bold, and let this night to you be one of fasting and of prayer.”

If the Udaller had not, before the commencement of the operation, been disposed to dispute the commands of the Sybil, it may be well believed he was less so now, that it had terminated to all appearance so fortunately. So he sat down in silence, and seized upon a volume which lay near him as a sort of desperate effort to divert ennui, for on no other occasion had Magnus been known to have recourse to a book for that purpose. It chanced to be a book much to his mind, being the well-known work of Olaus Magnus, upon the manners of the ancient Northern nations. The book is unluckily in the Latin language, and the Danske or Dutch were either of them much more familiar to the Udaller. But then it was the fine edition, which contains representations of the war-chariots, fishing exploits, warlike exercises, and domestic employments of the Scandinavians, executed on copperplates; and thus the information which the work refused to the understanding, was addressed to the eye, which, as is well known both to old and young, answers the purpose of amusement as well, if not better.



Meanwhile the two sisters, pressed as close to each other's side as two flowers on the same stalk, sate with their arms reciprocally passed over each other's shoulder, as if they feared some new and unforeseen cause of coldness was about to snatch them from each other's side, and interrupt the sister-like harmony which had been but just restored. Norna sat opposite to them, sometimes revolving the large parchment volume with which they had found her employed at their entrance, and sometimes gazing on the sisters with a fixed look, in which an interest of a kind unusually tender seemed occasionally to disturb the stern and rigorous solemnity of her countenance. All was still and silent as death, and the subsiding emotions of Brenda had not yet permitted her to wonder whether the remaining hours of the evening were to be passed in the same manner, when the scene of tranquillity was suddenly interrupted by the entrance of the dwarf Pacolet, or, as the Udaller called him, Nicholas Strumpfer.

Norna darted an angry glance on the intruder, who seemed to deprecate her resentment by holding up his hands and uttering a babbling sound; then, instantly resorting to his usual mode of conversation, he expressed himself by a variety of signs made rapidly upon his fingers, and as rapidly answered by his mistress, so that the young women,



who had never heard of such an art, and now saw it practised by two beings so singular, almost conceived their mutual intelligence the work of enchantment. When they had ceased their intercourse, Norna turned to Magnus Troil with much haughtiness, and said, "How, my kinsman? have you so far forgot yourself, as to bring earthly food into the house of the Reimkennar, and make preparations in the dwelling of Power and of Despair, for refectation, and wassail, and revelry? — Speak not — answer not," she said; "the duration of the cure which was wrought even now depends on your silence and obedience — bandy but a single look or word with me, and the latter condition of that maiden shall be worse than the first."

This threat was an effectual charm upon the tongue of the Udaller, though he longed to indulge it in vindication of his conduct.

"Follow me all of you," said Norna, striding to the door of the apartment, "and see that no one look backward — we leave not this apartment empty, though we, the children of mortality, be removed from it."

She went out, and the Udaller signed to his daughters to follow, and to obey her injunctions. The Sybil moved swifter than her guests down the rude descent, (such it might rather be termed,



than a proper staircase,) which led to the lower apartment. Magnus and his daughters, when they entered the chamber, found their own attendants aghast at the presence and proceedings of Norna of the Fitful-head.

They had been previously employed in arranging the provisions which they had brought along with them, so as to present a comfortable cold meal, as soon as the appetite of the Udaller, which was as regular as the return of tide, should induce him to desire some refreshment; and now they stood staring in fear and surprise, while Norna, seizing upon one article after another, and well supported by the zealous activity of Pacolet, flung their whole preparations out of the rude aperture which served for a window, and over the cliff, from which the ancient Burg arose, into the ocean, which raged and foamed beneath. *Vifda*, (dried beef) hams, and pickled pork, flew after each other into empty space, smoked geese were restored to the air, and cured fish to the sea, their native elements indeed, but which they were no longer capable of traversing; and the devastation proceeded so rapidly that the Udaller could scarce secure from the wreck his silver drinking cup; while the large leathern flask of brandy, which was destined to supply his favourite beverage, was sent to follow the rest of



the supper, by the hands of Pacolet, who regarded, at the same time, the disappointed Udaller with a malicious grin, as if, notwithstanding his own natural taste for the liquor, he enjoyed the disappointment and surprise of Magnus Troil still more than he would have relished sharing his enjoyment.

The destruction of the brandy flask exhausted the patience of Magnus, who roared out in a tone of no small displeasure, "Why, kinswoman, this is wasteful madness — where, and on what, would you have us sup?"

"Where you will," answered Norna, "and on what you will — but not in my dwelling, and not on the food with which you have profaned it. Vex my spirit no more, but begone every one of you! You have been here too long for my good, perhaps for your own."

"How, kinswoman," said Magnus, "would you make outcasts of us at this time of night, when even a Scotchman would not turn a stranger from the door? — Bethink you, dame, it is shame on our lineage for ever, if this squall of yours should force us to slip cables, and go to sea so scantily provided."

"Be silent, and depart," said Norna; "let it suffice you have got that for which you came."



I have no harbourage for mortal guests, no provision to relieve human wants. There is beneath the cliff a beach of the finest sand, a stream of water as pure as the well of Kildinguie, and the rocks bear dulse as wholesome as that of Guiydin; and well you wot, that the well of Kildinguie and the dulse of Guiydin will cure all maladies save Black Death." \*

"And well I wot," said the Udaller, "that I would eat corrupted sea-weed like a starling, or salted seal's flesh like the men of Burraforth, or whilks, buckies, and lampits, like the poor sneaks of Stroma, rather than break wheat bread and drink red wine in a house where it is begrudged me. — And yet," he said, checking himself, "I am wrong, very wrong, my cousin, to speak thus to you, and I should rather thank you for what you have done, than upbraid you for following your own ways. But I see you are impatient — we will be all under way presently. — And you, ye knaves," addressing his servants, "that were in such hurry with your service before it was lacked, get out of doors with you presently, and manage to catch the ponies; for I see we must make for another harbour to-night, if we would not sleep with an empty stomach, and on a hard bed."

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\* So at least says an Orkney proverb.



The domestics of Magnus, already sufficiently alarmed at the violence of Norna's conduct, scarce waited the imperious command of their master to evacuate her dwelling with all dispatch; and the Udaller, with a daughter on each arm, was in the act of following them, when Norna said emphatically, "Stop!" They obeyed, and again turned towards her. She held out her hand to Magnus, which the placable Udaller instantly folded in his own ample palm.

"Magnus," she said, "we part by necessity, but, I trust, not in anger?"

"Surely not, cousin," said the warm-hearted Udaller, well nigh stammering in his hasty disclamation of all unkindness, — "most assuredly not. I never bear ill will to any one, much less to one of my own blood, and who has piloted me with her advice through many a rough tide, as I would pilot a boat betwixt Swona and Stroma, through all the waws, wells, and swelchies of the Pentland Firth."

"Enough," said Norna, "and now farewell, with such a blessing as I dare bestow — not a word more! — Maidens," she added, "draw near, and let me kiss your brows."

The Sybil was obeyed by Minna with awe, and by Brenda with fear; the one overmastered by the



warmth of her imagination, the other by the natural timidity of her constitution. Norna then dismissed them, and in two minutes afterwards they found themselves beyond the bridge, and standing upon the rocky platform in front of the ancient Pictish Burg, which it was the pleasure of this sequestered female to inhabit. The night, for it was now fallen, was unusually serene. A bright twilight, which glimmered far over the surface of the sea, supplied the brief absence of the summer's sun; and the waves seemed to sleep under its influence, so faint and slumberous was the sound with which one after another rolled on and burst against the foot of the cliff on which they stood. In front of them stood the rugged fortress, seeming, in the uniform greyness of the atmosphere, as aged, as shapeless, and as massive, as the rock on which it was founded. There was neither sight nor sound that indicated human habitation, save that from one rude shot-hole glimmered the flame of the feeble lamp by which the Sybil was probably pursuing her mystical and nocturnal studies, shooting upon the twilight, in which it was soon lost and confounded, a single line of tiny light; bearing the same proportion to that of the atmosphere, as the aged woman and her serf, the sole inhabitants of that desert, did to the solitude with which they were surrounded.



For several minutes, the party, thus suddenly and unexpectedly expelled from the shelter where they had reckoned to spend the night, stood in silence, each wrapt in their own separate reflections. Minna, her thoughts fixed on the mystical consolation which she had received, in vain endeavoured to extract from the words of Norna a more distinct and intelligible meaning; and the Udaller had not yet recovered his surprise at the extrusion to which he had been thus whimsically subjected, under circumstances that prohibited him from resenting as an insult, treatment, which, in all other respects, was so shocking to the genial hospitality of his nature, that he still felt like one disposed to be angry, if he but knew how to set about it. Brenda was the first who brought matters to a point, by asking where they were to go, and how they were to spend the night. The question, which was asked in a tone, that, amidst its simplicity, had something dolorous in it, changed entirely the train of her father's ideas; and the unexpected perplexity of their situation now striking him in a comic point of view, he laughed till his very eyes run over, while every rock around him rung, and the sleeping sea-fowl were startled from their repose, by the loud hearty explosions of his obstreperous hilarity.

The Udaller's daughters, eagerly representing



to their father the risk of displeasing Norna by this unlimited indulgence of his mirth, united their efforts to drag him to a farther distance from her dwelling. Magnus, yielding to their strength, which, feeble as it was, his own fit of laughing rendered him incapable of resisting, suffered himself to be pulled to a considerable distance from the burg, and then escaping from their hands, and sitting down, or rather suffering himself to drop, upon a large stone which lay conveniently by the way-side, he again laughed so long and lustily, that his vexed and anxious daughters became afraid that there was something more than natural in these repeated convulsions.

At length his mirth exhausted both itself and the Udaller's strength. He groaned heavily, wiped his eyes, and said, not without feeling some desire to renew his obstreperous cachinnation, «Now, by the bones of Saint Magnus, my ancestor and namesake, one would imagine that being turned out of doors, at this time of night, was nothing short of an absolutely exquisite jest; for I have shaken my sides till I am sore at it. There we sat, made snug for the night, and I made as sure of a good supper and a can as ever I had been of either, — and here we are all taken aback; and then poor Brenda's doleful voice, and melancholy question, of What is to be done, and



where are we to sleep! In good faith, unless one of those knaves, who must needs torment the poor woman by their trencher-work before it was wanted, can make amends by telling us of some snug port under our lea, we have no other course for it but to steer through the twilight on the bearing of Burgh-Westra, and rough it out as well as we can by the way. I am sorry but for you, girls; for many a cruize have I been upon when we were on shorter allowance than we are like to have now. — I would I had but secured a morsel for you, and a drop for myself; and then there had been but little to complain of."

Both sisters hastened to assure the Udaller that they felt not the least occasion for food.

"Why, that is well," said Magnus; "and so being the case, I will not complain of my own appetite, though it is sharper than convenient. And the rascal, Nicholas Strumpfer, — what a leer the villain gave me as he started the good Nantz into the salt-water! He grinned, the knave, like a seal on a skerry. — Had it not been for vexing my poor kinswoman Norna, I would have sent his mis-begotten body, and mis-shapen jolterhead, after my bonny flask, as surely as Saint Magnus lies at Kirkwall!"

By this time the servants returned with the ponies, which they had very soon caught — these sen-



sible animals finding nothing so captivating in the pastures where they had been suffered to stray, as inclined them to resist the invitation again to subject themselves to saddle and bridle. The prospects of the party were also considerably improved by learning that the contents of their sumpter-ponies' burthen had not been entirely exhausted, — a small basket having fortunately escaped the rage of Norna and Pacolet, by the rapidity with which one of the servants had caught up and removed it. The same domestic, an alert and ready-witted fellow, had observed upon the beach, not above three miles distant from the Burg, and about a quarter of a mile off their straight path, a deserted *Skio*, or fisherman's hut, and suggested that they should occupy it for the rest of the night, in order that the ponies might be refreshed, and the young ladies spend the night under cover from the night air.

When we are delivered from great and serious dangers, our mood is, or ought to be, grave, in proportion to the peril we have escaped, and the gratitude due to protecting Providence. But few things raise the spirits more naturally, or more harmlessly, than when means of extrication from any of the lesser embarrassments of life are suddenly presented to us; and such was the case in the present instance. The Udaller, relieved from



the apprehensions for his daughters suffering from fatigue, and himself from too much appetite and too little food, carolled Norse ditties, as he spurred Bergen through the twilight, with as much glee and gallantry as if the night-ride had been entirely a matter of his own free choice. Brenda lent her voice to some of his chorusses, which were echoed in ruder notes by the servants, who, in that simple state of society, were not considered as guilty of any breach of respect by mingling their voices with the song. Minna, indeed, was as yet unequal to such an effort; but she compelled herself to assume some share in the general hilarity of the meeting; and, contrary to her conduct since the fatal morning which concluded the Festival of Saint John, she seemed to take her usual interest in what was going on around her, and answered with kindness and readiness the repeated inquiries concerning her health, with which the Udaller every now and then interrupted his carol. And thus they proceeded by night, a happier party by far than they had been when they traced the same route on the preceding morning, making light of the difficulties of the way, and promising themselves shelter and a comfortable night's rest in the deserted hut which they were now about to approach, and which they expected to find in a state of darkness and solitude.

The Udaller, relieved from



But it was the lot of the Udaller that day to be deceived more than once in his calculations.

“And which way lies this cabin of yours, Laurie?” said the Udaller, addressing the intelligent domestic of whom we just spoke.

“Yonder it should be,” said Laurence Scholey, “at the head of the Voe — but, by my faith, if it be the place, there are folks there before us — God and Saint Ronan send that they be canny company!”

In truth there was a light in the deserted hut, strong enough to glimmer through every chink of the shingles and wreck-wood of which it was constructed, and to give the whole cabin the appearance of a smithy seen by night. The universal superstition of the Zetlanders seized upon Magnus and his escort.

“They are Trows,” said one voice.

“They are witches,” murmured another.

“They are mermaids,” muttered a third; “only hear their wild singing!”

All stopped; and, in effect, some notes of music were audible, which Brenda, with a voice that quivered a little, but yet had a turn of arch ridicule in its tone, pronounced to be the sound of a fiddle.



“Fiddle or fiend,” said the Udaller, who, if he believed in such nightly apparitions as had struck terror into his retinue, certainly feared them not — “fiddle or fiend, may the devil wash me if a witch cheats me out of supper to-night, for the second time.”

So saying, he dismounted, clenched his trusty truncheon in his hand, and advanced towards the hut, followed by Laurence alone; the rest of his retinue continuing stationary on the beach, beside his daughters and the ponies.



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 CHAPTER XXX.

*What ho, my jovial mates! come on! we'll  
frolic it*

*Like fairies frisking in the merry moonshine,  
Seen by the curtal friar, who, from some  
christening*

*Or some blithe bridal, hies belated cell-ward —  
He starts, and changes his bold bottle swagger  
To churchman's pace professional, and ran-  
sacking*

*His treacherous memory for some holy hymn,  
Finds but the roundel of the midnight catch.*

*Old Play.*

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THE stride of the Udaller relaxed nothing of its length or of its firmness as he approached the glimmering cabin, from which he now heard distinctly the sound of the fiddle. But if still long and firm, his steps succeeded each other rather more slowly than usual; for, like a cautious,



though a brave general, Magnus was willing to reconnoitre his enemy before assailing him. The trusty Laurence Scholey, who kept close behind his master, now whispered into his ear, "So help me, sir, as I believe that the ghaist, if ghaist it be, that plays so bravely on the fiddle, must be the ghaist of Master Claud Halcro, or his wraith at least; for never was bow drawn across thairm which brought out the gude auld spring of 'Fair and Lucky,' so like his ain."

Magnus was himself much of the same opinion; for he knew the blithe minstrelsy of the spirited little old man, and hailed the hut with a hearty hilloah, which was immediately replied to by the cheery note of his ancient mess-mate, and Halcro himself presently made his appearance on the beach.

The Udaller now signed to his retinue to come up, whilst he asked his friend, after a kind greeting and much shaking of hands, "How the devil he came to sit there playing old tunes in so desolate a place, like an owl whooping to the moon?"

"And tell me rather, Fowde," said Claud Halcro, "how you came to be within hearing of me? — ay, by my word, and with your bonny daughters too? — Jarto Minna and Jarto Brenda, I bid you welcome to these yellow sands — and there shake hands, as glorious John, or some



other body, says upon the same occasion. And how came you here like two fair swans, making day out of twilight, and turning all you step upon to silver?"

"You shall know all about them presently," answered Magnus; "but what mess-mates have you got in the hut with you? I think I hear some one speaking."

"None," replied Claud Halero, "but that poor creature the Factor, and my imp of a boy, Giles. I — but come in — come in — here you will find us starving in comfort — not so much as a mouthful of sour sillocks to be had for love or money."

"That may be in a small part helped," said the Udaller; "for though the best of our supper is gone over the Fitful crags to the sealchies and the dog-fish, yet we have got something in the kit still. — Here, Laurie, bring up the *vifda*."

"*Jokul, jokul!*"\* was Laurence's joyful answer; and he hastened for the basket, while the party entered the hut.

Here, in a cabin which smelled strongly of dried fish, and whose sides and roof were jet-black with smoke, they found the unhappy Triptolemus

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\* *Jokul*, — Yes, sir; a Norse expression still in common use.



Yellowley, seated beside a fire made of dried seaweed, mingled with some peats and wreck-wood; his sole companion a barefooted yellow-haired Zetland boy, who acted occasionally as a kind of page to Claud Halcro, bearing his fiddle on his shoulders, saddling his poney, and rendering him similar duties of kindly observance. The disconsolate agriculturist, for such his visage betokened him, displayed little surprise, and less animation, at the arrival of the Udaller and his companions, until, after the party had drawn close to the fire, (a neighbourhood which the dampness of the night-air rendered far from disagreeable,) the pannier was opened and a tolerable supply of barley-bread and hung beef, besides a flask of brandy, (no doubt smaller than that which the relentless hand of Pacolet had emptied into the ocean,) gave assurances of a tolerable supper. Then, indeed, the worthy Factor grinned, chuckled, rubbed his hands, and inquired after all friends at Burgh-Westra.

When they had all partaken of this needful refreshment, the Udaller repeated his inquiries at Halcro, and more particularly at the Factor, how they came to be nestled in such a remote corner at such an hour of night.

“Maister Magnus Troil,” said Triptolemus, when a second cup had given him spirits to tell his tale of woe, “I would not have you think



that it is a little thing that disturbs me. I came of that grain that takes a sair wind to shake it. I have seen many a Martinmas and many a Whitsunday in my day, whilk are the times peculiarly grievous to those of my craft, and I could aye bide the bang; but I think I am like to be dung ower a'thegither in this damned country of yours — Gude forgie me for swearing — but evil communication corrupteth good manners.”

“Now, Heaven guide us,” said the Udaller, “what is the matter with the man? Why, man, if you will put your plough into new land, you must look to have it hank on a stone now and then — You must set us an example of patience, seeing you come here for our improvement.”

“And the de'il was in my feet when I did so,” said the Factor; “I had better have set myself to improve the cairn on Clochnaben.”

But what is it, after all,” said the Udaller, “that has befallen you? — what is it that you complain of?”

“Of every thing that has chanced to me since I landed on this island, which I believe was accursed at the very creation,” said the agriculturist, “and assigned as a fitting station for sor-ners, thieves, whores, (I beg the ladies' pardon,) witches, bitches, and evil spirits.”

“By my faith, a goodly catalogue,” said Magnus; “and there has been the day, that if I had



heard you give out the half of it, I should have turned improver myself, and have tried to amend your manners with a cudgel."

"Bear with me," said the Factor, "Master Fowde, or Master Udaller, or whatever else they may call you, and as you are strong be pitiful, and consider the luckless lot of any inexperienced person who lights upon this earthly paradise of yours. He asks for drink, they bring him sour whey — no disparagement to your brandy, Fowde, which is excellent — You ask for meat, and they bring you sour fish that Satan might choke upon — You call your labourers together and bid them work; it proves Saint Magnus's day, or Saint Ronan's day, or some infernal saint or other — or else, perhaps, they have come over the bed with the wrong foot foremost, or they have seen an owl, or a rabbit has crossed them, or they have dreamed of a roasted horse — in short, nothing is to be done — Give them a spade, and they work as if it burned their fingers; but set them to dancing, and see when they will tire of funking and flinging."

"And why should they, poor bodies," said Claud Halcro, "as long as there are good fiddlers to play to them?"

"Ay, ay," said Triptolemus, shaking his head, "you are a proper person to uphold them in such a humour. Well, to proceed: — I till a piece of



my best ground; down comes a sturdy beggar that wants a kail-yard, or a planta-cruive, as you call it, and he claps down an inclosure in the middle of my bit shot of corn, as lightly as if he was baith laird and tenant, and gainsay him wha likes, there he plants his kail-plants! I sit down to my sorrowful dinner, thinking to have peace and quietness there at least; when in comes one, two, three, four, or half a dozen of skelping long lads, from some foolery or anither, misca' me for barring my ain door against them, and eat up half of what my sister's providence — and she is not over bountiful — has provided for my dinner. Then in comes a witch with an ellwand in her hand, and she raises the wind or lays it, which ever she likes, majors up and down my house as if she was mistress of it, and I am bounden to thank heaven if she carries not the broadside of it away with her!"

"Still," said the Fowde, "this is no answer to my question — how the foul fiend I come to find you at moorings here?"

"Have patience, worthy sir," replied the afflicted Factor, "and listen to what I have to say, for I fancy it will be as well to tell you the whole matter. You must know, I knce thought that I had gotten a small God-send, that might have made all these matters easier."

"How! a God-send! Do you mean a wreck,  
LXXX. N



Master Factor?" exclaimed Magnus; "shame upon you, that should have set example to others!"

"It was no wreck," said the Factor; "but if you must needs know, it chanced that as I raised an hearth-stane in one of the old chambers at Stourburgh, (for my sister is minded that there is little use in mair fire-places about a house but one, and I wanted the stane to knock bear up-on) — when, what should I light on but a horn full of old coins, silver the maist feck of them, but wi' a bit sprinkling of gold among them too. Weel, I thought this was a dainty windfa', and so thought Babie, and we were the mair willing to put up with a place where there were siccan braw nest-eggs — and we slade down the stane cannily over the horn, which seemed to me to be the very cornucopia, or horn of abundance; and for further security, Babie wad visit the room maybe twenty times in the day, and mysell at an orra time, to the boot of a' that."

"On my word, and a very pretty amusement," said Claud Halcro, "to look over a horn of one's own siller. I question if glorious John Dryden ever enjoyed such a pastime in his life — I am sure I never did."

"Yes, but you forget, Jarto Claud," said the Udaller, "that the Factor was only counting over the money for my Lord the Chamberlain. As



he is so keen for his Lordship's rights in whales and wrecks, he would not surely forget him in treasure-trove."

"A-hem! a-hem! a-he — he — hem!" ejaculated Triptolemus, seized at the moment with an awkward fit of coughing, — "no doubt, my Lord's right in the matter would have been considered, being in the hand of one, though I say it, as just as can be found in Angus-shire. But mark what happened of late! One day, as I went up to see that all was safe and snug, and just to count out the share that should have been his Lordship's — for surely the labourer, as one may call the finder, is worthy of his hire — nay, some learned men say, that when the finder, in point of trust and in point of power, representeth the *dominus* or lord superior, he taketh the whole; but let that pass, as a kittle question *in apicibus juris*, as we wont to say at Saint Andrews — Well, sir and ladies, when I went to the upper chamber, what should I see but an uglysome ill-shaped, and most uncouth dwarf, that wanted but hoofs and horns to have made an utter devil of him, counting over the very hornfull of siller! I am no timorous man, Master Fowde, but judging that I should proceed with caution in such a matter — for I had reason to believe that there was devilry in it — I accosted him in Latin, (whilk it is maist be-



coming to speak to aught whilk taketh upon it as a goblin,) and conjured him *in nomine*, and so forth, with such words as my poor learning could furnish of a suddenty, whilk, to say truth, were not so many, nor altogether so purely latineezed as might have been, had I not been few years at college, and many at the pleugh. Well, sirs, he started at first, as one that heareth that which he expects not; but presently recovering himself, he wawls on me with his grey een, like a wild cat, and opens his mouth, whilk resembled the mouth of an oven, for the de'il a tongue he had in it that I could spy, and took upon his ugly self, altogether, the air and bearing of a bull-dog, whilk I have seen loosed at a fair upon a mad staig; whereupon I was something daunted, and withdrew myself to call upon sister Babie, who fears neither dog nor devil, when there is in question the little penny siller. And truly she raise to the fray as I hae seen the Lindsays and Ogilvies bristle up, when Donald MacDonnoch, or the like, made a start down frae the Highlands on the braes of Islay. But an auld useless carline, called Tronda Dronsdaughter, (they might call her Drone the sell of her, without farther addition,) flung herself right in my sister's gate, and yelloched and skirled, that you would have thought her a whole generation of hounds; where-upon I judged it best to make



ae yoking of it, and stop the pleugh until I got my sister's assistance. Whilk when I had done, and we mounted the stair to the apartment in which the said dwarf, devil, or other apparition was to be seen, dwarf, horn, and siller, were as clean gane as if the cat had lickit the place where I saw them."

Here Triptolemus paused in his extraordinary narration, while the rest of the party looked upon each other in surprise, and the Udaller muttered to Claud Halcro — "By all tokens, this must have been either the devil or Nicholas Strumpfer; and if it were him, he is more of a goblin than e'er I gave him credit for, and shall be apt to rate him as such in future." Then addressing the Factor, he inquired — "Saw ye nought how this dwarf of yours parted company?"

"As I shall answer it, no," answered Triptolemus, with a cautious look around him as if daunted by the recollection, "neither I nor Babie, who had her wits more about her, not having seen this unseemly vision, could perceive any way by whilk he made evasion. Only Tronda said she saw him flee forth of the window of the west roundel of the auld house, upon a dragon, as she averred. But, as the dragon is held a fabulous animal, I suld pronounce her averment to rest upon *deceptio visus*."

"But may we not ask farther," said Brenda,



stimulated by curiosity to know as much of her cousin Norna's family as was possible, "how all this operated upon Master Yellowley, so as to occasion his being in this place at so unseasonable an hour?"

"Seasonable it must be, Mistress Brenda, since it brought us into your sweet company," answered Claud Halcro, whose mercurial brain far outstripped the slow conceptions of the agriculturist, and who became impatient of being so long silent. "To say the truth, it was I, Mistress Brenda, who recommended to our friend the Factor, whose house I chanced to call at just after this mischance, (and where, by the way, owing doubtless to the hurry of their spirits, I was but poorly received,) to make a visit to our other friend at Fitful-head, well judging from certain points of the story, at which my other and more particular friend than either (looking at Magnus) may chance to form a guess, that they who break a head are the best to find a plaister. And as our friend the Factor scrupled travelling on horseback, in respect of some tumbles from our ponies ——"

"Which are incarnate devils," said Triptolemus aloud, muttering under his breath, "like every live thing that I have found in Zetland."

"Well, Fowde," continued Halcro, "I undertook to carry him to Fitful-head in my little



boat, which Giles and I can manage as if it were an Admiral's barge full manned; and Master Triptolemus Yellowley will tell you how seaman-like I piloted him to the little haven, within a quarter of a mile of Norna's dwelling."

"I wish to heaven you had brought me as safe back again," said the Factor.

"Why, to be sure," replied the minstrel, "I am, as glorious John says, —

A daring pilot in extremity,  
Pleased with the danger when the waves go  
high,

I seek the storm — but, for a calm unfit,  
Will steer too near the sands, to shew my  
wit."

"I shewed little wit in entrusting myself to your charge," said Triptolemus; "and you still less when you upset the boat at the throat of the Voe, as you call it, when even the poor bairn, that was mair than half drowned, told you that you were carrying too much sail; and then ye wad fasten the rape to the bit stick on the boat-side, that ye might have time to play on the fiddle."

"What!" said the Udaller, "make fast the



sheets to the thwart? a most unseamanlike practice, Claud Halcro."

"And sae came of it," replied the agriculturist; "for the neist blast, and we are never lang without ane in these parts, whomled us as a gudewife would whomle a bowie, and ne'er a thing wad Maister Halcro save but his fiddle. His puir bairn swam out like a water-spaniel, and I swattered hard for my life, wi' the help of ane of the oars; and here we are, comfortless creatures, that, till a good wind blew you here, had naething to eat but a mouthful of Norway rusk, that has mair saw-dust than rye-meal in it, and tastes liker turpentine than any thing else."

"I thought we heard you very merry," said Brenda, "as we came along the beach."

"Ye heard a fiddle, Mistress Brenda," said the Factor; "and maybe ye may think there can be nae dearth, Miss, where that is skirling. But then it was Maister Claud Halcro's fiddle, whilk, I am apt to think, wad skirl at his father's death-bed, or at his ain, sae lang as his fingers could pinch thairm. And it was nae sma' aggravation to my misfortune to have him bumming a' sorts of springs, — Norse and Scots, Highland and Lawland, English and Italian, in my lug, as if nothing had happened that was amiss, and we all in such stress and perplexity."



“Why, I told you sorrow would never right the boat, Factor,” said the thoughtless minstrel, “and I did my best to make you merry; if I failed, it was neither my fault nor my fiddle’s. I have drawn the bow across it before glorious John Dryden himself.”

“I will hear no stories about glorious John Dryden,” answered the Udaller, who dreaded Halcro’s narratives as much as Triptolemus did his music. “I will hear nought of him, but one story to every three bowls of punch, — it is our old paction, you know. But tell me instead, what said Norna to you about your errand?”

“Ay, there was anither fine up-shot,” said Master Yellowley. “She wadna look at us, or listen to us; only she bothered our acquaintance, Master Halcro here, who thought he could have sae much to say wi’ her, with about a score of questions about your family and household estate, Master Magnus Troil; and when she had gotten a’ she wanted out of him, I thought she wad hae dung him ower the craig, like an empty pea-cod.”

“And for yourself?” said the Udaller.

“She wadna listen to my story, nor hear sae much as a word that I had to say,” answered Triptolemus; “and sae much for them that seek to witches and familiar spirits.”

“You needed not to have had recourse to Norna’s wisdom, Master Factor,” said Minna,



cause to it, Maguus asked him sharply, what was his business there? Pacolet replied by producing a letter, which he gave to the Udaller, uttering a sound resembling the word *Shogh*.

“That is the Highlandman’s language,” said the Udaller — “did’st thou learn that, Nicholas, when you lost your own?”

Pacolet nodded, and signed to him to read his letter.

“That is no such easy matter by fire-light, my good friend,” replied the Udaller; “but it may concern Minna, and we must try.”

Brenda offered her assistance, but the Udaller answered, “No, no, my girl, — Norna’s letters must be read by those they are written to. Give the knave, Strumpfer, a drop of brandy the while, though he little deserves it at my hands, considering the grin with which he sent the good Nantz down the crag this morning, as if it had been as much ditch-water.”

“Will you be this honest gentleman’s cup-bearer — his Ganymede, friend Yellowley, or shall I?” said Claud Halcro aside to the Factor; while Magnus Troil, having carefully wiped his spectacles, which he produced from a large copper-case, had disposed them on his nose, and was studying the epistle of Norna.

“I would not touch him, or go near him, for all the Carse of Gowrie,” said the Factor,



whose fears were by no means entirely removed, though he saw that the dwarf was received as a creature of flesh and blood by the rest of the company; «but I pray you to ask him what he has done with my horn of coin?»

The dwarf, who heard the question, threw back his head, and displayed his enormous throat, pointing to it with his finger.

«Nay, if he has swallowed them there is no more to be said,” replied the Factor; «only I hope he will thrive on them as a cow on wet clover. He is dame Norna’s servant it’s like, — such man, such mistress! But if theft and witchcraft are to go unpunished in this land, my Lord must find another factor; for I have been used to live in a country where men’s worldly gear was keepit from infang and outfang thief, as well as their immortal souls from the claws of the de’il and his cummers, — sain and save us!”

The agriculturist was perhaps the less reserved in expressing his complaints, that the Udaller was for the present out of hearing, having drawn Claud Halcro apart into another corner of the hut.

«And tell me,” said he, «friend Halcro, what errand took thee to Sumburgh, since I reckon it was scarce the mere pleasure of sailing in partnership with yonder barnacle?»



“In faith, Fowde,” said the Bard, “and if you will have the truth, I went to speak to Norna on your affairs.”

“On my affairs?” replied the Udaller; “on what affairs of mine?”

“Just touching your daughter’s health. I heard that Norna refused your message, and would not see Eric Scambester. Now, said I to myself, I have scarce joyed in meat, or drink, or music, or aught else, since Jarto Minna has been so ill; and I may say, literally as well as figuratively, that my day and night have been made sorrowful to me. In short, I thought I might have some more interest with old Norna than another, as Scalds and wise women were always accounted something akin; and I undertook the journey with the hope to be of some use to my old friend and his lovely daughter.”

“And it was most kindly done of you, good warm hearted Claud,” said the Udaller, shaking him warmly by the hand, — “I ever said you shewed the good old Norse heart amongst all thy fiddling and thy folly. Why, man, never wince for the matter, but be blithe that thy heart is better than thy head. Well, — and I warrant you got no answer from Norna?”

“None to purpose,” replied Claud Halcro; “but she held me close to question about Min-



na's illness too, — and I told her how I had met her abroad the other morning in no very good weather, and how her sister Brenda said she had hurt her foot; — in short, I told her all and every thing I knew."

"And something more besides, it would seem," said the Udaller; "for I, at least, never heard before that Minna had hurt herself."

"O, a scratch! a mere scratch!" said the old man; "but I was startled about it — terrified lest it had been the bite of a dog, or some hurt from a venomous thing. I told all to Norna, however."

"And what," answered the Udaller, "did she say, in the way of reply?"

"She bade me begone about my business, and told me that the issue would be known at the Kirkwall Fair; and said just the like to this noodle of a Factor — it was all that either of us got for our labour," said Halcro.

"That is strange," said Magnus. "My kinswoman writes me in this letter not to fail going thither with my daughters. This Fair runs strongly in her head; — one would think she intended to lead the market, and yet she has nothing to buy or to sell there which I know of. And so you came away as wise as you went, and swamped your boat at the mouth of the Voe?"



“Why, how could I help it?” said the poet. “I had set the boy to steer, and as the flaw came suddenly off shore, I could not let go the tack and play on the fiddle at the same time. But it is all well enough, — salt-water never harmed Zetlander, so he could get out of it; and, as Heaven would have it, we were within man’s depth of the shore, and chancing to find this skio, we should have done well enough, with shelter and fire, and are much better than well with your good cheer and good company. But it wears late, and Night and Day must be both as sleepy as old Midnight can make them. There is an inner crib here, where the fishers slept, — somewhat fragrant with the smell of their fish, but that is wholesome. They shall bestow themselves there, with the help of what cloaks you have, and then we will have one cup of brandy, and one stave of glorious John, or some little trifle of my own, and so sleep as sound as cobblers.”

“Two glasses of brandy, if you please,” said the Udaller, “if our stores do not run dry; but not a single stave of glorious John or of any one else to - night.”

And this being arranged and executed agreeably to the peremptory pleasure of the Udaller, the whole party consigned themselves to slumber for the night, and on the next day departed for



their several habitations, Claud Halcro having previously arranged with the Udaller that he would accompany him and his daughters on their proposed visit to Kirkwall.

## CHAPTER XXXI.

"By this hand, then, think at me as far in the devil's book as thou and Falskap, for ordinary and persistence. ~~Let it be the man.~~ I could tell to thee, (as to one of us) see me for fault of a better, to call my friend) I could be and, and and indeed too."

## Henry IV. Part 2d.

We must now change the scene from Zealand to Orléans, and request our readers to accompany us to the ruins of an elegant, though ancient, castle, called La Ferté, where, though much dilapidated, still exist in the neighbourhood of the massive and venerable pile, which Norwegian devotions dedicated to Saint Margaret, the Martyr and being contiguous to the famous Palace, which is also ruinous, the place is important as exhibiting vestiges of the middle ages.



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CHAPTER XXXI.

«By this hand, thou think'st me as far in the devil's book as thou and Falstaff, for obduracy and persistency. Let the end try the man..... Albeit I could tell to thee, (as to one it pleases me for fault of a better, to call my friend,) I could be sad, and sad indeed too.»

Henry IV. Part 2d.

WE must now change the scene from Zetland to Orkney, and request our readers to accompany us to the ruins of an elegant, though ancient structure, called the Earl's Palace. These remains, though much dilapidated, still exist in the neighbourhood of the massive and venerable pile, which Norwegian devotion dedicated to Saint Magnus the Martyr, and, being contiguous to the Bishop's Palace, which is also ruinous, the place is impressive, as exhibiting vestiges of the mutations both

in Church and State which have affected Orkney, as well as countries more exposed to such convulsions. Several parts of these ruinous buildings might be selected (under suitable modifications) as the model of a Gothic mansion, providing architects would be contented rather to imitate what is really beautiful in that species of building, than to make a medley of the caprices of the order, confounding the military, ecclesiastical, and domestic styles of all ages at random, with additional fantasies and combinations of their own device, «all formed out of the builder's brain.”

The Earl's Palace forms three sides of an oblong square, and has, even in its ruins, the air of an elegant yet massive structure, uniting, as was usual in the residence of feudal princes, the character of a palace and of a castle. A great banquetting-hall, communicating with several large rounds, or projecting turret-rooms, and having at either end an immense chimney, testifies the ancient Northern hospitality of the Earls of Orkney, and communicates, almost in the modern fashion, with a gallery, or withdrawing-room, of corresponding dimensions, and having, like the hall, its projecting turrets. The lordly hall itself is lighted by a fine Gothic window of shafted stone at one end, and is entered by a spa-

cious and elegant staircase. consisting of three flights of stone steps. The exterior ornaments and proportions of the ancient building are also very handsome; but, being totally unprotected this remnant of the pomp and grandeur of Earls, who assumed the license as well as the dignity of petty sovereigns, is now fast crumbling to decay, and has suffered considerably since the date of our story.

With folded arms and downcast looks, the pirate Cleveland was pacing slowly the ruined hall which we have just described, a place of retirement which he had probably chosen because it was distant from public resort. His dress was considerably altered from that which he usually wore in Zetland, and seemed a sort of uniform, richly laced, and exhibiting no small quantity of embroidery; a hat with a plume, and a small-sword, very handsomely mounted, then the constant companion of every one who assumed the rank of a gentleman, shewed his pretensions to that character. But if his exterior was so far improved, it seemed to be otherwise with his health and spirits. He was pale, and had lost both the fire of his eye and the vivacity of his step, and his whole appearance indicated melancholy of mind, or suffering of body, or a combination of both evils.

As Cleveland thus paced these ancient ruins, a young man, of a light and slender form, whose showy dress seemed to have been studied with care, yet exhibited more extravagance than judgment or taste, whose manner was a janty affectation of the free and easy rake of the period, and the expression of whose countenance was lively, with a cast of effrontery, tripped up the staircase, entered the hall, and presented himself to Cleveland, who merely nodded to him, and pulling his hat deeper over his brows, resumed his solitary and discontented promenade.

The stranger adjusted his own hat, nodded in return, took snuff, with the air of a *petit maitre*, from a richly chased gold box, offered it to Cleveland as he paced, and being repulsed rather coldly, replaced the box in his pocket, folded his arms in his turn, and stood looking with fixed attention on his motions whose solitude he had interrupted. At length Cleveland stopped short, as if impatient of being longer the subject of his observation, and said abruptly, "Why can I not be left alone for half an hour, and what the devil is it that you want?"

"I am glad you spoke first," answered the stranger, carelessly; "I was determined to know whether you were Clement Cleveland, or Cle-

ment's ghost, and they say ghosts never take the first word, so I now set it down for yourself in life and limb; and here is a fine old hurly-house you have found out for an owl to hide himself in at mid-day, or a ghost to revisit the pale glimpses of the moon, as the divine Shakespeare says."

"Well, well," answered Cleveland abruptly, "your jest is made, and now let us have your earnest."

"In earnest, then, Captain Cleveland," replied his companion, "I think you know me for your friend."

"I am content to suppose so," replied Cleveland.

"It is more than supposition," replied the young man; "I have proved it — proved it both here and elsewhere."

"Well, well," answered Cleveland, "I admit you have been always a friendly fellow — and what then?"

"Well, well — and what then?" replied the other; "this is but a brief way of thanking folks. Look you, Captain, here is Benson, Barlowe,

Dick Fletcher, and a few others of us who wished you well, have kept your old comrade Captain Goffe in these seas upon the look-out for you, when he and Hawkins, and the greater part of the ship's company, would fain have been down on the Spanish Main, and at the old trade."

"And I wish to God that you had all gone about your business," said Cleveland, "and left me to my fate."

"Which would have been to be informed against and hanged, Captain, the first time that any of these Dutch or English rascals, whom you have lightened of their cargoes, came to set their eyes upon you, and no place more likely to meet with sea-faring men, than in these Islands. And here, to screen you from such a risk, we have been wasting our precious time here, till folks are grown very peery; and when we have no more goods or money to spend amongst them, the fellows will be for grabbing the ship."

"Well then, why do you not sail off without me?" said Cleveland—"There has been fair partition, and all have had their share—let all do as they like. I have lost my ship, and having been once a Captain, I will not go to sea under command of Goffe or any other man. Besides, you

know well enough that both Hawkins and he bear me ill will for keeping them from sinking the Spanish brig, with the poor devils of negroes on board."

"Why, what the foul fiend is the matter with thee?" said his companion; "Are you Clement Cleveland, our own old true-hearted Clem of the Cleugh, and do you talk of being afraid of Hawkins and Goffe, and a score of such fellows, when you have myself, and Barlow, and Dick Fletcher at your back? When was it we deserted you, either in council or in fight, that you should be afraid of our flinching now? And as for serving under Goffe, I hope it is no new thing for gentlemen of fortune who are going on the account, to change a Captain now and then. Let us alone for that, Captain you shall be; for death rock me asleep if I serve under that fellow Goffe, who is as very a blood-hound as ever sucked bitch — no, no, I thank you — my Captain must have a little of the gentleman about him, howsoever. Besides, you know, it was you who first dipped my hands in the dirty water, and turned me from a stroller by land, to a rover by sea."

"Alas, poor Bunce!" said Cleveland, "you owe me little thanks for that service."

"That is as you take it," replied Bunce; "for my part, I see no harm in levying contributions

on the public either one way or tother. But I wish you would forget that name of Bunce, and call me Altamont, as I have often desired you to do. I hope a gentleman of the roving trade has as good a right to have an alias as a stroller, and I never stepped on the boards but what I was Altamont at the least."

"Well then, Jack Altamont," replied Cleveland, "since Altamont is the word ——"

"Yes, but Captain, *Jack* is not the word, though Altamont be so. Jack Altamont? — why, 'tis a velvet coat with paper lace — Let it be Frederick, Captain; Frederick Altamont is all of a piece."

"Frederick be it then, with all my heart," said Cleveland; "and pray tell me, which of your names will sound best at the head of the Last Speech, Confession, and Dying Words of John Bunce, *alias* Frederick Altamont, who was this morning hanged at Execution-dock, for the crime of Piracy upon the High Seas?"

"Faith, I cannot answer that question, without another can of grog, Captain; so if you will go down with me to Bet Haldane's on the quay. I will bestow some thought on the matter, with

the help of a right pipe of Trinidad. We will have the gallon bowl filled with the best stuff you ever tasted, and I know some smart wenches who will help us to drain it. But you shake your head — you're not i' the vein? — Well then, I will stay with you; for by this hand, Clem, you shift me not off. Only I will ferret you out of this burrow of old stones, and carry you into sunshine and fair air. — Where shall we go?"

"Where you will," said Cleveland, "so that you keep out of the way of our own rascals, and all others."

"Why, then," replied Bunce, "you and I will go up to the Hill of Whitford, which overlooks the town, and walk together as gravely and honestly as a pair of well employed attorneys."

As they proceeded to leave the ruinous castle, Bunce, turning back to look at it, thus addressed his companion:

"Hark ye, Captain, doest thou know who last inhabited this old cock-loft?"

"An Earl of the Orkneys, they say," replied Cleveland.

“And are you avised what death he died off?” said Bunce; “for I have heard that it was of a tight neck-collar — a hempen fever, or the like.”

“The people here do say,” replied Cleveland, “that his lordship, some hundred years ago, had the mishap to become acquainted with the nature of a loop and a leap in the air.”

“Why, la ye there now!” said Bunce; “there was some credit in being hanged in those days, and in such whorshipful company. And what might his lordship have done to deserve such promotion?”

“Plundered the liege subjects, they say,” replied Cleveland; “slain and wounded them, fired upon his Majesty’s flag, and so forth.”

“Near a-kin to a gentleman rover, then,” said Bunce, making a theatrical bow towards the old building; “and, therefore, my most potent, grave, and reverend Signior Eari, I crave leave to call you my loving cousin, and bid you most heartily adieu. I leave you in the good company of rats and mice, and so forth, and I carry with me an honest gentleman, who, having of late had no more heart than a mouse, is now desirous to run away from his profession and friends like a rat,

and would therefore be a most fitting denizen of your Earlship's palace."

"I would advise you not to speak so loud, my good friend, Frederick Altamont, or John Bunce, said Cleveland; "when you were on the stage, you might safely rant as loud as you listed; but, in your present profession, of which you are so fond, every man speaks under correction of the yard-arm, and a running noose."

The comrades left the little town of Kirkwall in silence, and ascended the Hill of Whiteford, which raises its brow of dark heath, uninterrupted by inclosures or cultivation of any kind, to the northward of the ancient Burgh of Saint Magnus. The plain at the foot of the hill was already occupied by numbers of persons who were engaged in making preparations for the Fair of Saint Olla, to be held upon the ensuing day, and which forms a general rendezvous to all the neighbouring islands of Orkney, and is even frequented by many persons from the more distant archipelago of Zetland. It is, in the words of the Proclamation, "a free Mercat and Fair, holden at the good Burgh of Kirkwall on the third of August, being Saint Ollaw's day," and continuing for an indefinite space thereafter, extending from three days to a week, and upwards, The Fair is of great

antiquity, and derives its name from Olaus, Olave, Ollaw, the celebrated Monarch of Norway, who, rather by the edge of his sword than any milder argument, introduced Christianity into those isles, and was respected as the patron of Kirkwall some time before he shared that honour with Saint Magnus the Martyr.

It was no part of Cleveland's purpose to mingle in the busy scene which was here going on; and, turning their route to the left, they soon ascended into undisturbed solitude, save where the grouse, more plentiful in Orkney, perhaps, than in any other part of the British dominions, rose in covey, and went off before them. Having continued to ascend till they had well nigh reached the summit of the conical hill, both turned round, as with one consent, to look at and admire the prospect beneath.

The lively bustle which extended between the foot of the hill and the town, gave life and variety to that part of the scene; then was seen the town itself, out of which arose, like a great mass, superior in proportion as it seemed to the whole burgh, the ancient Cathedral of Saint Magnus, of the heaviest order of Gothic architecture, but grand, solemn, and stately, the work of a distant age, and of a powerful hand. The quay, with the

shipping, lent additional vivacity to the scene; and not only the whole beautiful bay, which lies betwixt the promontories of Inganess and Quanterness, at the bottom of which Kirkwall is situated, but all the sea, so far as visible, and in particular the whole strait betwixt the island of Shapinsha and that called Pomona, or the Mainland, was covered and enlivened by a variety of boats and small vessels, freighted from distant islands to convey passengers or merchandize to the Fair of Saint Ollaw.

Having attained the point by which this fair and busy prospect was most completely commanded, each of the strangers, in seaman fashion, had recourse to his spy-glass, to assist the naked eye in considering the bay of Kirkwall, and the numerous vessels by which it was traversed. But the attention of the two companions seemed to be arrested by different objects. That of Bunce, or Altamont, as he chose to call himself, was rivetted to the armed sloop, where, conspicuous by her square rigging and length of beam, with the English jack and pennon, which they had the precaution to keep flying, she lay among the merchant vessels, as distinguished from them by the trim neatness of her appearance, as a trained soldier amongst a crowd of clowns.

“Yonder she lies,” said Bunce; “I wish to God she was in the bay of Honduras — you captain, on the quarter deck, I your lieutenant, and Fletcher quarter-master, and fifty stout fellows under us — I should not wish to see these blasted heaths and rocks again for one while! — And captain you shall soon be. The old brute Goffe gets drunk as a lord every day, swaggers, and shoots, and cuts among the crew; and besides, he has quarrelled with the people here so damnably, that they will scarce let water or provisions go on board of us, and we expect an open breach every day.”

As Bunce received no answer, he turned short round on his companion, and perceiving his attention otherwise engaged, exclaimed, — “What the devil is the matter with you? or what can you see in all that trumpery small-craft, which is only loaded with stock-fish and ling, and smoked geese, and tubs of butter that is worse than tallow — the cargoes of the whole lumped together would not be worth the flash of a pistol. — No, no, give me such a chase as we might see from the mast-head off the island of Trinidad. Your Don, rolling as deep in the water as a grampus, deep-loaden with rum, sugar, and bales of tobacco, and all the restingots, moidores, and gold dust; then set all sail, clear the deck, stand to quarters,

up with the Jolly Roger* — we near her — we make her out to be well manned and armed."

"Twenty guns on her lower deck," said Cleveland.

"Forty, if you will," retorted Bunce, "and we have but ten mounted — never mind. The Don blazes away — never mind yet, my brave lads — run her alongside, and on board with you — to work, with your grenadoes, your cutlasses, pole-axes, and pistols — The Don cries Miserecordia, and we share the cargo without *co licencio Seignior*."

"By my faith," said Cleveland, "thou takest so kindly to the trade, that all the world may see that no honest man was spoiled when you were made a pirate. But you shall not prevail on me to go farther in the devil's road with you; for you know yourself that what is got over his back is spent — you wot how. In a week, or a month at most, the rum and the sugar is out, the bales of tobacco have become smoke, the moidores, ingots,

* The pirates gave this name to the black flag, which, with many horrible devices to enhance its terrors was their favourite ensign.

and gold dust, have got out of our hands, into those of the quiet, honest, conscientious folks who dwell at Port Royal and elsewhere — wink hard on our trade as long as we have money, but not a jot beyond. Then we have cold looks, and it may be a hint is given to the Judge Marshal; for when our pockets are worth nothing, our honest friends, rather than want, will make money upon our heads. Then comes a high gallows and a short halter, and so dies the Gentleman Rover. I tell thee I will leave this trade; and when I turn my glass from one of these barks and boats to another, there is not the worst of them which I would not row for life, rather than continue to be what I have been. These poor men make the sea a means of honest livelihood and friendly communication between shore and shore, for the mutual benefit of the inhabitants; but we have made it a road to the ruin of others, and to our own destruction here and in eternity. — I am determined to turn honest man, and use this life no longer!”

“And where will your honesty take up its abode, if it please you?” said Bunce. — “You have broke the laws of every nation, and the hand of the law will detect and crush you wherever you may take refuge. — Cleveland, I speak to you more seriously than I am wont to do. I

have had my reflections too, and they have been bad enough and bitter enough, though they lasted but a few minutes, to spoil me weeks of joviality. But here is the matter, — what can we do but go on as we have done, unless we have a direct purpose of adorning the yard-arm?"

"We may claim the benefit of the proclamation to those of our sort who come in and surrender," said Cleveland.

"Umph!" answered his companion, drily; "the date of that day of grace has been for some time over, and they may take the penalty or grant the pardon at their pleasure. Were I you, I would not put my neck in such a venture."

"Why, others have been admitted but lately to favour, and why should not I?" said Cleveland.

"Ay," replied his associate, "Harry Glasby and some others have been spared; but Glasby did what was called good service, in betraying his comrades, and retaking the Jolly Fortune; and that I think you would scorn, even to be revenged of the brute Goffe yonder."

"I would die a thousand times sooner," said Cleveland.

“I will be sworn for it,” said Bunce; “and the others were forecastle fellows — petty larceny rogues, scarce worth the hemp it would have cost to hang them. But your name has stood too high amongst the gentlemen of fortune for you to get off so easily. You are the prime buck of the herd, and will be marked accordingly.”

“And why so, I pray you?” said Cleveland; “you know well enough my aim, Jack.”

“Frederick, if you please,” said Bunce.

“The devil take your folly! — Pr’ythee keep thy wit, and let us be grave for a moment.”

“For a moment — be it so,” said Bunce; “but I feel the spirit of Altamont coming fast upon me, — I have been a grave man for ten minutes already.”

“Be so then for a little longer,” said Cleveland: “I know, Jack, that you really love me; and since we have come thus far in this talk, I will trust you entirely. Now tell me why should I be refused the benefit of this gracious proclamation? I have borne a rough outside, as thou knowest; but, in time of need, I can shew the

number of lives which I have been the means of saving, the property which I have restored to those who owned it, when, without my intercession, it would have been wantonly destroyed. In short, Bunce, I can shew — ”

“That you were as gentle a thief as Robin Hood himself,” said Bunce, “and for that reason, I, Fletcher, and the better sort amongst us, love you, as one who saves the character of us Gentlemen Rovers from utter reprobation. — Well, suppose your pardon made out, what are you to do next? — what class in society will receive you? — with whom will you associate? Old Drake, in Queen Bess’s time, could plunder Peru and Mexico without a line of commission to shew for it, and, blessed be her memory, he was knighted for it on his return. And there was Hal Morgan, the Welchman, nearer our time, in the days of merry King Charles, brought all his gettings home, had his estate and his country-house, and who but he. But that is all ended now — once a pirate, and an outcast for ever. The poor devil may go and live, shunned and despised by every one, in some obscure sea-port, with such part of his guilty earnings as courtiers and clerks leave him — for pardons do not pass the seals for nothing; — and when he takes his walk along the pier, if a stranger

asks, who is the down-looking, swarthy, melancholy man, for whom all make way, as if he brought the plague in his person, the answer shall be, that is such-a-one, the pardoned pirate! — No honest man will speak to him, — no woman of repute will give him her hand.”

“Your picture is too highly coloured, Jack,” said Cleveland, suddenly interrupting his friend; “there are women — there is one at least, that would be true to her lover, even if he were what you have described.”

Bunce was silent for a moment, and looked fixedly at his friend. “By my soul!” he said at length, “I begin to think myself a conjuror. Unlikely as it all was, I could not help suspecting from the beginning that there was a girl in the case. Why, this is worse than Prince Volscius in love, ha! ha! ha!”

“Laugh as you will,” said Cleveland, “it is true; — there is a maiden who is contented to love me, pirate as I am; and I will fairly own to you, Jack, that though I have often at times detested our roving life, and myself for following it, yet I doubt if I could have found resolution to make the break which I have now resolved on, but for her sake.”

“Why, then, God-a-mercy!” replied Bunce, “there is no speaking sense to a madman; and love in one of your trade, Captain, is little better than lunacy. The girl must be a rare creature, for a wise man to risk hanging for her. But harkye, may she not be a little touched as well as yourself? — and is it not sympathy that has done it? She is, I understand, not one of our ordinary cockatrices, but a girl of conduct and character.”

“Both are as undoubted as that she is the most beautiful and bewitching creature whom the eye ever opened upon,” answered Cleveland.

“And she loves thee, knowing thee, most noble Captain, to be a commander among those gentlemen of fortune whom the vulgar call pirates?”

“Even so — I am assured of it,” said Cleveland.

“Why, then,” answered Bunce, “she is either mad in good earnest, as I said before, or she does not know what a pirate is.”

“You are right in the last point,” replied Cleveland. “She has been bred in such remote

simplicity, and utter ignorance of what is evil, that she compares our occupation with that of the old Northmen, who swept sea and haven with their victorious galleys, established colonies, conquered countries, and took the name of Sea-Kings."

"And a better one it is than that of pirate, and comes much to the same purpose, I dare say," said Bunce. "But this must be a mettled wench! — why did you not bring her aboard? methinks it was pity to baulk her fancy."

"And do you think," said Cleveland, "that I could so utterly play the part of a fallen spirit as to avail myself of her enthusiastic error, and bring an angel of beauty and innocence acquainted with such a hell as exists on board of yonder infernal ship of ours? — I tell you, my friend, that were all my former sins doubled in weight and in dye, such a villainy would have outglared and outweighed them all."

"Why, then, Captain Cleveland," said his confidant, "methinks it was but a fool's part to come hither at all. The news must one day have gone abroad, that the celebrated pirate, Captain Cleveland, with his good sloop the Revenge,

had been lost on the Mainland of Zetland, and all hands perished; so you would have remained hid both from friend and enemy, and might have married your pretty Zetlander, and converted your sash and scarf into fishing-nets, and your cutlass into a harpoon, and swept the seas for fish instead of florins."

"And so I had determined," said the Captain; "but a Jagger, as they call them here, like a meddling, peddling thief as he is, brought down intelligence to Zetland of your lying here, and I was fain to set off, to see if you were the consort of whom I had told them, long before I thought of leaving the roving trade."

"Ay," said Bunce, "and so far you judged well. For as you had heard of our being at Kirkwall, so we should have soon learned that you were at Zetland; and some of us for friendship, some for hatred, and some for fear of your playing Harry Glasby upon us, would have come down for the purpose of getting you into our company again."

"I suspected as much," said the Captain, "and therefore was fain to decline the courteous offer of a friend, who proposed to bring me here

about this time. Besides, Jack, I recollected that, as you say, my pardon will not pass the seals without money, my own was waxing low — no wonder, thou knowest I was never a churl of it — And so — — —”

“And so you came for your share of the cobs?” replied his friend — “It was wisely done; and we shared honourably — so far Goffe has acted up to articles, it must be allowed. But keep your purpose of leaving him close in your breast, for I dread his playing you some dog’s trick or other; for he certainly thought himself sure of your share, and will hardly forgive your coming alive to disappoint him.”

“I fear him not,” said Cleveland, “and he knows that well. I would I were as well clear of the consequences of having been his comrade, as I hold myself to be of all those which may attend his ill-will. Another unhappy job I may be troubled with — I hurt a young fellow, who has been my plague for some time, in an unhappy brawl that chanced the morning I left Zetland.”

“Is he dead?” asked Bunce; “It is a more serious question here, than it would be on the Grand Caimains or the Bahama Isles, and where

a brace or two of fellows may be shot in a morning, and no more heard of or asked about them than if they were so many wood-pigeons. But here it may be otherwise; so I hope you have not made your friend immortal."

"I hope not," said the Captain, "though my anger has been fatal to those who have given me less provocation. To say the truth, I was sorry for the lad notwithstanding, and especially as I was forced to leave him in mad keeping."

"In mad keeping?" said Bunce; "why, what means that?"

"You shall hear," replied his friend. "In the first place, you are to know, this young man came suddenly on me while I was trying to gain Minna's ear for a private interview before I set sail, that I might explain my purpose to her. Now to be broken in on by the accursed rudeness of this young fellow at such a moment — —"

"The interruption deserved death," said Bunce, "by all the laws of love and honour!"

"A truce with your ends of plays, Jack, and listen one moment. — The brisk youth thought

proper to retort, when I commanded him to be gone. I am not, thou knowest, very patient, and enforced my commands with a blow, which he returned as roundly. We struggled, till I became desirous that we should part at any rate, which I could only effect by a stroke of my poniard, which, according to old use, I have, thou knowest, always about me. I had scarce done this when I repented; but there was no time to think of any thing save escape and concealment, for if the house rose on me, I was lost; as the fiery old man, who is head of the family, would have done justice on me had I been his brother. I took the body hastily on my shoulders to carry it down to the sea-shore, with the hasty purpose of throwing it into a *riva*, as they call them, or chasm of great depth, where it would have been long enough in being discovered. This done, I intended to jump into the boat which I had lying ready, and set sail for Kirkwall. But as I walked hastily towards the beach with my burthen, the poor young fellow groaned, and so apprized me that the wound had not been instantly fatal. I was by this time well concealed amongst the rocks, and far from desiring to complete my crime, I laid the young man on the ground, and was doing what I could to staunch the blood, when suddenly an old woman stood

before me. She was a person whom I had frequently seen while in Zetland, and to whom they ascribe the character of a sorceress, or, as the negroes say, an Obi woman. She demanded the wounded man of me, and I was too much pressed for time to hesitate complying with her request. More she was about to say to me, when we heard the voice of a silly old man, belonging to the family, singing at some distance. She then pressed her finger on her lip as a sign of secrecy, whistled very low, and a shapeless, deformed brute of a dwarf coming to her assistance, they carried the wounded man into one of the caverns with which the place abounds, and I got to my boat and to sea with all expedition. If that old hag be, as they say, connected with the King of the Air, she favoured me that morning with a turn of her calling; for not even the West-Indian tornadoes, which we have weathered together, made a wilder racket than the squall that drove me so far out of our course, that, without a pocket-compass, which I chanced to have about me, I should never have recovered the Fair Isle for which we run, and where I found a brig which brought me to this place. But whether the old woman meant me weal or woe, here we came at length in safety

from the sea, and here I remain at land, in doubts and difficulties of more kinds than one.'

"O the devil take the Sumburgh-head," said Bunce, "or whatever they call the rock that you knocked our clever little Revenge against!"

"Do not say I knocked her on the rock," said Cleveland; "have I not told you fifty times, if the cowards had not taken to their boat, though I shewed them the danger, and told them they would be all swamped, which happened the instant they cast off the painter, she would have been afloat at this moment? Had they stood by me and the ship, their lives would have been saved; had I gone with them, mine would have been lost; who can say which is for the best?"

"Well," replied his friend, "I know your case now, and can the better help and advise. I will be true to you, Clement, as the blade to the hilt; but I cannot think that you should leave us. As the old Scottish song says, 'Waes my heart that we should sunder! — But come, you will aboard with us to-day, at any rate?'"

"I have no other place of refuge," said Cleveland, with a sigh.

He then once more ran his eyes over the bay, directed his spy-glass upon several of the vessels which traversed its surface, in hopes, doubtless, of discerning the vessel of Magnus Troil, and then followed his companion down the hill in silence.



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